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THE COMPLETE WORKS
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BRET HARTE

COLLECTED AND REVISED BY THE AUTHOR



VOL. X.

TALES OF TRAIL AND TOWN

LONDON
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Barker's Luck.

A BIRD twittered ! The morning sun shining through the open window was apparently more potent than the cool mountain air, which had only caused the sleeper to curl a little more tightly in his blankets. Barker's eyes opened instantly upon the light and the bird on the window ledge. Like all healthy young animals he would have tried to sleep again, but with his momentary consciousness came the recollection that it was *his* turn to cook the breakfast that morning, and he regretfully rolled out of his bunk to the floor. Without stopping to dress he opened the door and stepped outside, secure in the knowledge that he was overlooked only by the Sierras, and plunged his head and shoulders in the bucket of cold water that stood by the door. Then he began to clothe himself, partly in the cabin and partly in the open air, with a lapse between the putting on of his trousers and coat, which he employed in bringing in wood. Raking together the few embers on the *adobe* hearth, not without a prudent regard to the rattle-snake which had once been detected in haunting the warm ashes, he began to prepare breakfast. By this time the other sleepers, his partners Stacy and Demorest, young men of about his own age, were awake, alert, and lazily critical of his progress.

"I don't care about my quail on toast being underdone for breakfast," said Stacy, with a yawn ; "and you needn't serve with red wine. I'm not feeling very peckish this morning."

"And I reckon you can knock off the fried oysters after the Spanish mackerel for *me*," said Demorest gravely. "The fact is, that last bottle of Veuve Clicquot we had for supper wasn't as dry as I am this morning."

Accustomed to these regular Barmecide suggestions, Barker made no direct reply. Presently, looking up from the fire, he said: "There's no more saleratus, so you mustn't blame me if the biscuit is extra heavy. I told you we had none when you went to the grocery yesterday."

"And I told you we hadn't a red cent to buy any with," said Stacy, who was also treasurer. "Put these two negatives together and you make the affirmative—saleratus. Mix freely and bake in a hot oven."

Nevertheless, after a toilette as primitive as Barker's, they sat down to what he had prepared, with the keen appetite begotten of the mountain air and the regretful fastidiousness born of the recollection of better things. Jerked beef, frizzled with salt pork in a frying-pan, boiled potatoes, biscuit, and coffee composed the repast. The biscuits, however, proving remarkably heavy after the first mouthful, were used as missiles, thrown through the open door at an empty bottle, which had previously served as a mark for revolver practice, and a few moments later pipes were lit to counteract the effects of the meal and take the taste out of their mouths. Suddenly they heard the sound of horses' hoofs, saw the quick passage of a rider in the open space before the cabin, and felt the smart impact upon the table of some small object thrown by him. It was the regular morning delivery of the county newspaper!

"He's getting to be a mighty sure shot," said Demorest approvingly, looking at his upset can of coffee as he picked up the paper, rolled into a cylindrical wad as tightly as a cartridge, and began to straighten it out.

This was no easy matter, as the sheet had evidently been rolled while yet damp from the press; but Demorest eventually opened it and ensconced himself behind it.

"Nary news?" asked Stacy.

"No. There never is any," said Demorest scornfully. "We ought to stop the paper."

"You mean the paper man ought to. *We* don't pay him," said Barker gently.

"Well, that's the same thing, smarty. No news, no pay. Hallo!" he continued, his eyes suddenly riveted on the paper. Then, after the fashion of ordinary humanity, he stopped short and read the interesting item to himself. When he had finished he brought his fist and the paper, together, violently down upon the table. "Now look at this! Talk of luck, will you? Just think of it. Here are *we*—hard-working men with lots of *sabe*, too—grubbin' away on this hillside like niggers, glad to get enough at the end of the day to pay for our soggy biscuits and horse-bean coffee, and just look what falls into the lap of some lazy sneakin' greenhorn who never did a stroke of work in his life! Here are *we*, with no foolishness, no airs nor graces, and yet men who would do credit to twice that amount of luck—and seem born to it, too—and we're set aside for some long, lank, pen-wiping scrub, who just knows enough to sit down on his office stool and hold on to a bit of paper."

"What's up now?" asked Stacy, with the carelessness begotten of familiarity with his partner's extravagance.

"Listen," said Demorest, reading. "'Another unprecedented rise has taken place in the shares of the 'Yellow Hammer First Extension Mine,' since the sinking of the new shaft. It was quoted yesterday at ten thousand dollars a foot. When it is remembered that scarcely two

years ago the original shares, issued at fifty dollars per share, had dropped to only fifty cents a share, it will be seen that those who were able to hold on have got a good thing."

"What mine did you say?" asked Barker, looking up meditatively from the dishes he was already washing.

"The Yellow Hammer First Extension," returned Demorest shortly.

"I used to have some shares in that, and I think I have them still," said Barker musingly.

"Yes," said Demorest promptly; "the paper speaks of it here. 'We understand,'" he continued, reading aloud, "'that our eminent fellow-citizen, George Barker, otherwise known as 'Get Left Barker,' and 'Chucklehead,' is one of these fortunate individuals.'"

"No," said Barker, with a slight flush of innocent pleasure, "it can't say that. How could it know?"

Stacy laughed, but Demorest coolly continued: "You didn't hear all. Listen! 'We say *was* one of them; but having already sold his apparently useless certificates to our popular druggist, Jones, for corn plasters, at a reduced rate, he is unable to realise.'"

"You may laugh, boys," said Barker, with simple seriousness; "but I really believe I have got 'em yet. Just wait. I'll see!" He rose and began to drag a well-worn valise from under his bunk. "You see," he continued, "they were given to me by an old chap in return——"

"For saving his life by delaying the Stockton boat that afterwards blew up," returned Demorest briefly. "We know it all! His hair was white, and his hand trembled slightly as he laid these shares in yours, saying, and you never forgot the words, 'Take 'em, young man—and——'"

"For lending him two thousand dollars, then," continued Barker, with a simple ignoring of the interruption, as he quietly brought out the valise.

"*Two thousand dollars!*" repeated Stacy. "When did *you* have two thousand dollars?"

"When I first left Sacramento—three years ago," said Barker, unstrapping the valise.

"How long did you have it?" said Demorest incredulously.

"At least two days, I think," returned Barker quietly. "Then I met that man. He was hard up, and I lent him my pile and took those shares. He died afterwards."

"Of course he did," said Demorest severely. "They always do. Nothing kills a man more quickly than an action of that kind." Nevertheless the two partners regarded Barker rummaging among some loose clothes and papers with a kind of paternal toleration. "If you can't find them, bring out your government bonds," suggested Stacy. But the next moment, flushed and triumphant, Barker rose from his knees, and came towards them carrying some papers in his hands. Demorest seized them from him, opened them, spread them on the table, examined hurriedly the date, signatures, and transfers, glanced again quickly at the newspaper paragraph, looked wildly at Stacy and then at Barker, and gasped—

"By the living hookey! it is *so!*"

"B'gosh! he *has* got 'em!" echoed Stacy.

"Twenty shares," continued Demorest breathlessly, "at ten thousand dollars a share—even if it's only a foot—is two hundred thousand dollars! Jerusalem!"

"Tell me, fair Sir," said Stacy, with sparkling eyes, "hast still left in yonder casket any rare jewels, rubies, sarsenet, or links of fine gold? Peradventure a pearl or two may have been overlooked!"

"No—that's all," returned Barker simply.

"You hear him! Rothschild says 'that's all.' Prince Esterhazy says he hasn't another red cent—only two hundred thousand dollars."

"What ought I to do, boys?" asked Barker, timidly glancing from the one to the other. Yet he remembered with delight all that day, and for many a year afterwards, that he only saw in their faces unselfish joy and affection at that supreme moment.

"Do?" said Demorest promptly. "Stand on your head and yell! No! stop! Come here!" he seized both Barker and Stacy by the hand, and ran out into the open air. Here they danced violently with clasped hands around a small buckeye, in perfect silence, and then returned to the cabin, grave but perspiring.

"Of course," said Barker, wiping his forehead, "we'll just get some money on these certificates and buy up that next claim which belongs to old Carter—where you know we thought we saw the indication."

"We'll do nothing of the kind," said Demorest decidedly. "We ain't in it. That money is yours, old chap—every cent of it—property acquired before marriage, you know; and the only thing we'll do is to be d——d before we'll see you drop a dime of it into this God-forsaken hole. No!"

"But we're partners," gasped Barker.

"Not in *this!* The utmost we can do for you, opulent Sir—though it ill becomes us horny-handed sons of toil to rub shoulders with Dives—is perchance to dine with you, to take a pasty and a glass of Malvoisie, at some restaurant in Sacramento—when you've got things fixed, in honour of your return to affluence. But more would ill become us!"

"But what are *you* going to do?" said Barker, with a half-hysterical, half-frightened smile.

"We have not yet looked through our luggage," said Demorest with invincible gravity, "and there's a secret recess—a double fond—to my portmanteau, known only to a trusty page, which has not been disturbed since I left my ancestral home in Faginia. There may be a few First Debentures of Erie or what not still there."

"I felt some strange, disc-like protuberances in my dress suit the other day, but belike they are but poker chips," said Stacy thoughtfully.

An uneasy feeling crept over Barker. The colour which had left his fresh cheek returned to it quickly, and he turned his eyes away. Yet he had seen nothing in his companions' eyes but affection—with even a certain kind of tender commiseration that deepened his uneasiness. "I suppose," he said desperately, after a pause, "I ought to go over to Boomville and make some inquiries."

"At the bank, old chap; at the bank!" said Demorest emphatically. "Take my advice and don't go *anywhere else*. Don't breathe a word of your luck to anybody. And don't, whatever you do, be tempted to sell just now; you don't know how high that stock's going to jump yet."

"I thought," stammered Barker, "that you boys might like to go over with me."

"We can't afford to take another holiday on grub wages, and we're only two to work to-day," said Demorest, with a slight increase of colour and the faintest tremor in his voice. "And it won't do, old chap, for us to be seen bumming round with you on the heels of your good fortune. For everybody knows we're poor, and sooner or later everybody'll know you *were* rich even when you first came to us."

"Nonsense!" said Barker indignantly.

"Gospel, my boy!" said Demorest shortly.

"The frozen truth, old man!" said Stacy.

Barker took up his hat with some stiffness and moved towards the door. Here he stopped irresolutely, an irresolution that seemed to communicate itself to his partners. There was a moment's awkward silence. Then Demorest suddenly seized him by the shoulders with a grip that was half a caress, and walked him rapidly to the door. "And now don't stand foolin' with us, Barker, boy; but just trot off like a little man, and get your grip on that fortune; and when you've got your hooks in it hang on like grim death. You'll—" he hesitated for an instant only, possibly to find the laugh that should have accompanied his speech—"you're sure to find *us* here when you get back."

Hurt to the quick, but restraining his feelings, Barker clapped his hat on his head and walked quickly away. The two partners stood watching him in silence until his figure was lost in the underbrush. Then they spoke.

"Like him—wasn't it?" said Demorest.

"Just him all over," said Stacy.

"Think of him having that stock stowed away all these years and never even bothering his dear old head about it!"

"And think of his wanting to put the whole thing into this rotten hillside with us!"

"And he'd have done it, by gosh! and never thought of it again. That's Barker."

"Dear old man!"

"Good old chap!"

"I've been wondering if one of us oughtn't to have gone with him? He's just as likely to pour his money into the first lap that opens for it," said Stacy.

"The more reason why we shouldn't prevent him, or seem to prevent him," said Demorest almost fiercely. "There will be knaves and fools enough who will try to

put the idea of our using him into his simple heart without that. No! Let him do as he likes with it—but let him be himself. I'd rather have him come back to us even after he's lost the money—his old self and empty-handed—than try to change the stuff God put into him and make him more like others."

The tone and manner were so different from Demorest's usual levity that Stacy was silent. After a pause he said: "Well! we shall miss him on the hillside—won't we?"

Demorest did not reply. Reaching out his hand abstractedly, he wrenched off a small slip from a sapling near him, and began slowly to pull the leaves off, one by one, until they were all gone. Then he switched it in the air, struck his bootleg smartly with it, said roughly: "Come, let's get to work!" and strode away.

Meantime Barker, on his way to Boomville, was no less singular in his manner. He kept up his slightly affected attitude until he had lost sight of the cabin. But, being of a simple nature, his emotions were less complex. If he had not seen the undoubted look of affection in the eyes of his partners he would have imagined that they were jealous of his good fortune. Yet why had they refused his offer to share it with him? Why had they so strangely assumed that their partnership with him had closed? Why had they declined to go with him? Why had this money—of which he had thought so little, and for which he had cared so little—changed them toward him? It had not changed *him*—*he* was the same! He remembered how they had often talked and laughed over a prospective "strike" in mining, and speculated how *they* would do together with the money! And now that "luck" had occurred to one of them individually, the effect was only to alienate them! He could not make it out. He was hurt, wounded—yet oddly enough he was conscious now of a certain

power within him to hurt and wound in retribution. He was rich: he would let them see *he* could do without them. He was quite free now to think only of himself and Kitty.

For it must be recorded that, with all this young gentleman's simplicity and unselfishness, with all his loyal attitude to his partners, his *first* thought at the moment he grasped the fact of his wealth was of a young lady. It was Kitty Carter, the daughter of the hotel-keeper at Boomville, who owned the claim that the partners had mutually coveted. That a pretty girl's face should flash upon him with his conviction that he was now a rich man meant perhaps no disloyalty to his partners, whom he would still have helped. But it occurred to him now, in his half-hurt, half-vengeful state, that they had often joked him about Kitty, and perhaps further confidence with them was debarred. And it was only due to his dignity that he should now see Kitty at once.

This was easy enough, for, in the naïve simplicity of Boomville, and the economic arrangements of her father, she occasionally waited upon the hotel table. Half the town was always actively in love with her; the other half *had been*, and was silent, cynical, but hopeless in defeat. For Kitty was one of those singularly pretty girls occasionally met with in South-Western frontier civilisation, whose distinct and original refinement of face and figure were so remarkable and original as to cast a doubt on the sagacity and prescience of one parent and the morality of the other, yet no doubt with equal injustice. But the fact remained that she was slight, graceful, and self-contained, and moved beside her stumpy, commonplace father, and her faded, commonplace mother, in the dining-room of the Boomville Hotel like some distinguished alien. The three partners, by virtue, perhaps, of their college

education and refined manners, had been exceptionally noticed by Kitty. And for some occult reason—the more serious, perhaps, because it had no obvious or logical presumption to the world generally—Barker was particularly favoured.

He quickened his pace, and as the flagstaff of the Boomville Hotel rose before him in the little hollow he seriously debated whether he had not better go to the bank first, deposit his shares, get a small advance on them to buy a new necktie or a "boiled shirt" in which to present himself to Miss Kitty; but, remembering that he had partly given his word to Demorest that he would keep his shares intact for the present, he abandoned this project, probably from the fact that his projected confidence with Kitty was already a violation of Demorest's injunctions of secrecy, and his conscience was sufficiently burdened with that breach of faith.

But when he reached the hotel a strange trepidation overcame him. The dining-room was at its slack water, between the ebb of breakfast and before the flow of the preparation for the mid-day meal. He could not have his interview with Kitty in that dreary waste of reversed chairs and bare trestle-like tables, and she was possibly engaged in her household duties. But Miss Kitty had already seen him cross the road, and had lounged into the dining-room with an artfully simulated air of casually examining it. At the unexpected vision of his hopes, arrayed in the sweetest and freshest of rosebud sprigged print, his heart faltered. Then, partly with the desperation of a timid man, and partly through the working of a half-formed resolution, he met her bright smile with a simple inquiry for her father. Miss Kitty bit her pretty lip, smiled slightly, and preceded him with great formality to the office. Opening the door, without raising her lashes

to either her father or the visitor, she said, with a mischievous accenting of the professional manner, "Mr. Barker to see you on business," and tripped sweetly away.

And this slight incident precipitated the crisis. For Barker instantly made up his mind that he must purchase the next claim for his partners of this man Carter, and that he would be obliged to confide to him the details of his good fortune, and, as a proof of his sincerity and his ability to pay for it, he did so bluntly. Carter was a shrewd business man, and the well-known simplicity of Barker was a proof of his truthfulness, to say nothing of the shares that were shown to him. His selling price for his claim had been two hundred dollars, but here was a rich customer who, from a mere foolish sentiment, would be no doubt willing to pay more. He hesitated with a bland but superior smile. "Ah, that was my price at my last offer, Mr. Barker," he said suavely; "but, you see, things are going up since then."

The keenest duplicity is apt to fail before absolute simplicity. Barker, thoroughly believing him, and already a little frightened at his own presumption—not for the amount of the money involved, but from the possibility of his partners refusing his gift utterly—quickly took advantage of this *locus penitentiae*. "No matter, then," he said hurriedly; "perhaps I had better consult my partners first; in fact," he added, with a gratuitous truthfulness all his own, "I hardly know whether they will take it of me, so I think I'll wait."

Carter was staggered; this would clearly not do! He recovered himself with an insinuating smile. "You pulled me up too short, Mr. Barker; I'm a business man, but hang it all! what's that among friends? If you reckoned I *gave my word* at two hundred—why, I'm there! Say no

more about it—the claim's yours. I'll make you out a bill of sale at once."

"But," hesitated Barker, "you see I haven't got the money yet, and—"

"Money!" echoed Carter bluntly, "what's that among friends? Gimme your note at thirty days—that's good enough for *me*. An' we'll settle the whole thing now—nothing like finishing a job while you're about it." And before the bewildered and doubtful visitor could protest he had filled up a promissory note for Barker's signature and himself signed a bill of sale for the property. "And I reckon, Mr. Barker, you'd like to take your partners by surprise about this little gift of yours," he added smilingly. "Well, my messenger is starting for the Gulch in five minutes; he's going by your cabin, and he can just drop this bill o' sale, as a kind o' settled fact, on 'em afore they can say anything, see! There's nothing like actin' on the spot in these sort of things. And don't you hurry 'bout them either! You see, you sorter owe us a friendly call—havin' always dropped inter the hotel only as a customer—so ye'll stop here over luncheon, and I reckon, as the old woman is busy, why Kitty will try to make the time pass till then by playin' for you on her new pianner."

Delighted, yet bewildered by the unexpected invitation and opportunity, Barker mechanically signed the promissory note, and as mechanically addressed the envelope of the bill of sale to Demorest, which Carter gave to the messenger. Then he followed his host across the hall to the apartment known as "Miss Kitty's parlour." He had often heard of it as a sanctum impervious to the ordinary guest. Whatever functions the young girl assumed at the hotel and among her father's boarders, it was vaguely understood that she dropped them on crossing that sacred threshold, and became "*Miss Carter*." The county judge had been

entertained, there and the wife of the bank manager Barker's admission there was consequently an unprecedented honour.

He cast his eyes timidly round the room, redolent and suggestive in various charming little ways of the young girl's presence. There was the cottage piano which had been brought up in sections on the backs of mules from the foot of the mountain ; there was a crayon head of Minerva done by the fair occupant at the age of twelve ; there was a profile of herself done by a travelling artist ; there were pretty little china ornaments and many flowers, notably a faded but still scented woodland shrub which Barker had presented to her two weeks ago, and over which Miss Kitty had discreetly thrown her white handkerchief as he entered. A wave of hope passed over him at the act, but it was quickly spent as Mr. Carter's roughly-playful voice introduced him :

"Ye kin give Mr. Barker a tune or two to pass time afore lunch, Kitty. You kin let him see what you're doing in that line. But you'll have to sit up now, for this young man's come inter some property, and will be sasheying round in 'Frisco afore long with a biled shirt and a stove pipe, and be givin' the go-by to Boomville. Well ! you young folks will excuse me for a while, as I reckon I'll just toddle over and get the Recorder to put that bill o' sale on record. Nothin' like squaring things to onct, Mr. Barker."

As he slipped away Barker felt his heart sink. Carter had not only bluntly forestalled him with the news, and taken away his excuse for a confidential interview, but had put an ostentatious construction on his visit. What could she think of him now ? He stood ashamed and embarrassed before her.

But Miss Kitty, far from noticing his embarrassment, in a sudden concern regarding the "horrid" untidiness of the

room, which made her cheeks quite pink in one spot, and obliged her to take up and set down in exactly the same place several articles, was exceedingly delighted. In fact, she did not remember ever having been so pleased before in her life! These things were always so unexpected! Just like the weather, for instance. It was quite cool last night—and now it was just stifling. And so dusty! Had Mr. Barker noticed the heat coming from the Gulch? Or perhaps, being a rich man, he—with a dazzling smile—was above walking now. It was so kind of him to come here first and tell her father.

"I really wanted to tell only—*you*, Miss Carter," stammered Barker. "You see—" he hesitated. But Miss Kitty saw perfectly. He wanted to tell *her*, and seeing her, he asked for *her father*! Not that it made the slightest difference to her, for her father would have been sure to have told her. It was also kind of her father to invite him to luncheon. Otherwise she might not have seen him before he left Boomville.

But this was more than Barker could stand. With the same desperate directness and simplicity with which he had approached her father he now blurted out his whole heart to her. He told her how he had loved her hopelessly from the first time that they had spoken together at the church picnic. Did she remember it? How he had sat and worshipped her, and nothing else, at church! How her voice in the church choir had sounded like an angel's; how his poverty and his uncertain future had kept him from seeing her often, lest he should be tempted to betray his hopeless passion. How, as soon as he realised that he had a position, that his love for her need not make her ridiculous to the world's eyes, he came to tell her *all*. He did not even dare to hope! But she would *hear* him at least, would she not?

Indeed, there was no getting away from his boyish, simple, outspoken declaration. In vain Kitty smiled, frowned, glanced at her pink cheeks in the glass and stopped to look out of the window. The room was filled with his love—it was encompassing her—and, despite his shy attitude, seemed to be almost embracing her. But she managed at last to turn upon him a face that was now as white and grave as his own was eager and glowing.

“Sit down,” she said gently.

He did so obediently, but wonderingly. She then opened the piano and took a seat upon the music-stool before it, placed some loose sheets of music in the rack, and ran her fingers lightly over the keys. Thus entrenched, she let her hands fall idly in her lap, and for the first time raised her eyes to his.

“Now listen to me—be good and don’t interrupt! There!—not so near; you can hear what I have to say well enough where you are. That will do.”

Barker had halted with the chair he was dragging towards her and sat down.

“Now,” said Miss Kitty, withdrawing her eyes and looking straight before her, “I believe everything you say; perhaps I oughtn’t to—or at least *say* it—but I do. There! But because I do believe you—it seems to me all wrong! For the very reasons that you give for not having spoken to me *before*, if you really felt as you say you did, are the same reasons why you should not speak to me now. You see, all this time you have let nobody but yourself know how you felt towards me. In everybody’s eyes *you* and your partners have been only the three stuck-up, exclusive, college-bred men who mined a poor claim in the Gulch, and occasionally came here to this hotel as customers. In everybody’s eyes *I* have been only the rich hotel-keeper’s popular daughter, who some-

times waited upon you—but nothing more. But at least we were then pretty much alike, and as good as each other. And now, as soon as you have become suddenly rich, and, of course, the *superior*, you rush down here to ask me to acknowledge it by accepting you!"

"You know I never meant that, Miss Kitty," burst out Barker vehemently, but this protest was drowned in a rapid *roulade* from the young lady's fingers on the keys. He sank back in his chair.

"Of course you never *meant* it," she said, with an odd laugh; "but everybody will take it in that way, and you cannot go round to everybody in Boomville and make the pretty declaration you have just made to me. Everybody will say I accepted you for your money; everybody will say it was a put-up job of my father's. Everybody will say that you threw yourself away on me. And I don't know but that they would be right. Sit down, please! or I shall play again."

"You see," she went on, without looking at him; "just now you like to remember that you fell in love with me first as a pretty waiter girl, but if I became your wife it's just what you would like to *forget*. And *I* shouldn't, for I should always like to think of the time when you came here, whenever you could afford it, and sometimes when you couldn't, just to see me; and how we used to make excuses to speak with each other over the dishes. You don't know what these things mean to a woman who——" she hesitated a moment, and then added abruptly, "but what does that matter? You would not care to be reminded of it. So," she said, rising up with a grave smile and grasping her hands tightly behind her, "it's a good deal better that you should begin to forget it now. Be a good boy and take my advice. Go to San Francisco. You will meet some girl there in a way you will not after-

wards regret. You are young, and your riches, to say nothing," she added in a faltering voice that was somewhat inconsistent with the mischievous smile that played upon her lips, "of your kind and simple heart, will secure that which the world would call unselfish affection from one more equal to you, but would always believe was only *bought* if it came from me."

"I suppose you are right," he said simply.

She glanced quickly at him, and her eyebrows straightened. He had risen, his face white and his grey eyes widely opened. "I suppose you are right," he went on, "because you are saying to me what my partners said to me this morning, when I offered to share my wealth with them, God knows as honestly as I offered to share my heart with you. I suppose that you are both right; that there must be some curse of pride or selfishness upon the money that I have got; but *I* have not felt it yet, and the fault does not lie with me."

She gave her shoulders a slight shrug, and turned impatiently towards the window. When she turned back again he was gone. The room around her was empty; this room, which a moment before had seemed to be pulsating with his boyish passion, was now empty, and empty of *him*. She bit her lips, rose, and ran eagerly to the window. She saw his straw hat and brown curls as he crossed the road. She drew her handkerchief sharply away from the withered shrub over which she had thrown it, and cast the once treasured remains in the hearth. Then, possibly because she had it already in her hand, she clapped the handkerchief to her eyes, and, sinking sideways upon the chair he had risen from, put her elbows on its back, and buried her face in her hands.

It is the characteristic and perhaps cruelty of a simple nature to make no allowance for complex motives, or to

even understand them! So it seemed to Barker that his simplicity had been met with equal directness. It was the possession of this wealth that had in some way hopelessly changed his relations with the world. He did not love Kitty any the less; he did not even think she had wronged him; they, his partners and his sweetheart, were cleverer than he; there must be some occult quality in this wealth that he would understand when he possessed it, and perhaps it might even make him ashamed of his generosity; not in the way they had said, but in his tempting them so audaciously to assume a wrong position. It behoved him to take possession of it at once, and to take also upon himself alone the knowledge, the trials, and responsibilities it would incur. His cheeks flushed again as he thought he had tried to tempt an innocent girl with it, and he was keenly hurt that he had not seen in Kitty's eyes the tenderness that had softened his partners' refusal. He resolved to wait no longer, but sell his dreadful stock at once. He walked directly to the bank.

The manager, a shrewd but kindly man, to whom Barker was known already, received him graciously in recognition of his well-known simple honesty, and respectfully as a representative of the equally well-known poor but "superior" partnership of the Gulch. He listened with marked attention to Barker's hesitating but brief story, only remarking at its close—

"You mean, of course, 'the *Second* Extension' when you say 'First'?"

"No," said Barker; "I mean the 'First'—and it said First in the Boomville paper."

"Yes, yes!—I saw it—it was a printer's error. The stock of the 'First' was called in two years ago. No! You mean the 'Second,' for, of course, you've followed

the quotations, and are likely to know what stock you're holding shares of. When you go back, take a look at them, and you'll see I am right."

"But I brought them with me," said Barker, with a slight flushing as he felt in his pocket, "and I am quite sure they are the 'First.'" He brought them out and laid them on the desk before the manager.

The words "First Extension" were plainly visible. The manager glanced curiously at Barker, and his brow darkened.

"Did anybody put this joke up on you?" he said sternly. "Did your partners send you here with this stuff?"

"No! no!" said Barker eagerly. "No one! It's all *my* mistake. I see it now. I trusted to the newspaper."

"And you mean to say you never examined the stock or the quotations, nor followed it in any way, since you had it?"

"Never!" said Barker. "Never thought about it at all till I saw the newspaper. So it's not worth anything?" And, to the infinite surprise of the manager, there was a slight smile on his boyish face.

"I am afraid it is not worth the paper it's written on," said the manager gently.

The smile on Barker's face increased to a little laugh, in which his wondering companion could not help joining. "Thank you," said Barker suddenly, and rushed away.

"He beats everything!" said the manager, gazing after him. "D——d if he didn't seem even *pleased*."

He *was* pleased. The burden of wealth had fallen from his shoulders; the dreadful incubus that had weighed him down and parted his friends from him was gone! And he had not got rid of it by spending it foolishly. It had not ruined anybody yet; it had not altered anybody in *his*

eyes. It was gone ; and he was a free and happy man once more. He would go directly back to his partners ; they would laugh at him, of course, but they could not look at him now with the same sad, commiserating eyes. Perhaps even Kitty—but here a sudden chill struck him. He had forgotten the bill of sale ! He had forgotten the dreadful promissory note given to her father in the rash presumption of his wealth ! How could it ever be paid ? And, more than that, it had been given in a fraud. He had no money when he gave it, and no prospect of any but what he was to get from those worthless shares. Would anybody believe him that it was only a stupid blunder of his own ? Yes, his partners might believe him ; but, horrible thought, he had already implicated *them* in his fraud ! Even now, while he was standing there hesitatingly in the road, they were entering upon the new claim he had *not paid for—could not pay for*—and in the guise of a benefactor he was dishonouring them. Yet it was Carter he must meet first ; he must confess all to him. He must go back to the hotel—that hotel where he had indignantly left her, and tell the father he was a fraud. It was terrible to think of ; perhaps it was part of that money curse that he could not get rid of, and was now realising ; but it *must* be done. He was simple, but his very simplicity had that unhesitating directness of conclusion which is the main factor of what men call “ pluck.”

He turned back to the hotel and entered the office. But Mr. Carter had not yet returned. What was to be done ? He could not wait there ; there was no time to be lost ; there was only one other person who knew his expectations, and to whom he could confide his failure—it was Kitty. It was to taste the dregs of his humiliation, but it must be done. He ran up the staircase and knocked timidly at the sitting-room door. There was a

momentary pause, and a weak voice said "Come in." Barker opened the door; saw the vision of a handkerchief thrown away, of a pair of tearful eyes that suddenly changed to stony indifference, and a graceful but stiffening figure. But he was past all insult now.

"I would not intrude," he said simply, "but I came only to see your father. I have made an awful blunder—more than a blunder, I think—a *fraud*. Believing that I was rich, I purchased your father's claim for my partners, and gave him my promissory note. I came here to give him back his claim—for that note can *never* be paid! I have just been to the bank; I find I have made a stupid mistake in the name of the shares upon which I based my belief in my wealth. The ones I own are worthless—I am as poor as ever—I am even poorer, for I owe your father money I can never pay!"

To his amazement he saw a look of pain and scorn come into her troubled eyes which he had never seen before. "This is a feeble trick," she said bitterly; "it is unlike you—it is unworthy of you!"

"Good God! You must believe me. Listen! It was all a mistake—a printer's error. I read in the paper that the stock for the First Extension mine had gone up, when it should have been the Second. I had some old stock of the First, which I had kept for years, and only thought of when I read the announcement in the paper this morning. I swear to you——"

But it was unnecessary. There was no doubting the truth of that voice—that manner. The scorn fled from Miss Kitty's eyes, to give place to a stare, and then suddenly change to two bubbling blue wells of laughter. She went to the window and laughed. She sat down to the piano and laughed. She caught up the handkerchief and, hiding half her rosy face in it, laughed. She finally

collapsed into an easy chair and, burying her brown head in its cushions, laughed long and confidentially until she brought up suddenly against a sob. And then was still.

Barker was dreadfully alarmed. He had heard of hysterics before. He felt he ought to do something. He moved towards her timidly, and gently drew away her handkerchief. Alas! the blue wells are running over now. He took her cold hands in his; he knelt beside her and passed his arm around her waist. He drew her head upon his shoulders. He was not sure that any of these things were effective until she suddenly lifted her eyes to his with the last ray of mirth in them vanishing in a big tear-drop, put her arms round his neck, and sobbed—

“O George! You blessed innocent!”

An eloquent silence was broken by a remorseful start from Barker.

“But I must go and warn my poor partners, dearest; there yet may be time; perhaps they have not yet taken possession of your father's claim.”

“Yes, George dear,” said the young girl, with sparkling eyes; “and tell them to do so *at once!*”

“What?” gasped Barker.

“At once—do you hear?—or it may be too late! Go quick.”

“But your father—Oh, I see, dearest, you will tell him all yourself, and spare me.”

“I shall do nothing so foolish, Georgey. Nor shall you! Don't you see the note isn't due for a month? Stop! Have you told anybody but Paw and me?”

“Only the bank manager.”

She ran out of the room, and returned in a minute tying the most enchanting of hats by a ribbon under her oval chin. “I'll run over and fix him,” she said.

"Fix him?" returned Barker, aghast.

"Yes, I'll say your wicked partners have been playing a practical joke on you, and he mustn't give you away. He'll do anything for me."

"But my partners didn't! On the contrary—"

"Don't tell me, George," said Miss Kitty severely. "They ought never to have let you come here with that stuff. But come! You must go at once. You must not meet Paw; you'll blurt out everything to him; I know you! I'll tell him you could not stay to luncheon. Quick, now; go. What? Well—there!"

Whatever it represented, the exclamation was apparently so protracted that Miss Kitty was obliged to push her lover to the front landing before she could disappear by the back stairs. But, once in the street, Barker no longer lingered. It was a good three miles back to the Gulch; he might still reach it by the time his partners were taking their noonday rest, and he resolved that, although the messenger had preceded him, they would not enter upon the new claim until the afternoon. For Barker, in spite of his mistress's injunction, had no idea of taking what he couldn't pay for; he would keep the claim intact until something could be settled. For the rest, he walked on air! Kitty loved him! The accursed wealth no longer stood between them. They were both poor now—everything was possible.

The sun was beginning to send dwarf shadows towards the east when he reached the Gulch. Here a new trepidation seized him. How would his partners receive the news of his utter failure? *He* was happy, for he had gained Kitty through it. But they? For a moment it seemed to him that he had purchased his happiness through their loss. He stopped, took off his hat, and ran his fingers remorsefully through his damp curls.

Another thing troubled him. He had reached the crest of the Gulch, where their old working ground was spread before him like a map. They were not there; neither were they lying under the four pines on the ridge where they were wont to rest at midday. He turned with some alarm to the new claim adjoining theirs, but there was no sign of them there either. A sudden fear that they had, after parting from him, given up the claim in a fit of disgust and depression, and departed, now overcame him. He clapped his hand on his head and ran in the direction of the cabin.

He had nearly reached it when the rough challenge of "Who's there?" from the bushes halted him, and Demorest suddenly swung into the trail. But the singular look of sternness and impatience which he was wearing vanished as he saw Barker, and with a loud shout of "All right, it's only Barker! Hooray!" he ran towards him. In an instant he was joined by Stacy from the cabin, and the two men, catching hold of their returning partner, waltzed him joyfully and breathlessly into the cabin. But the quick-eyed Demorest suddenly let go his hold and stared at Barker's face. "Why, Barker, old boy, what's up?"

"Everything's up," gasped the breathless Barker. "It's all up about these stocks. It's all a mistake; all an infernal lie of that newspaper. I never had the right kind of shares. The ones I have are worthless rags;" and the next instant he had blurted out his whole interview with the bank manager.

The two partners looked at each other, and then, to Barker's infinite perplexity, the same extraordinary convulsion that had seized Miss Kitty fell upon them. They laughed, holding on each other's shoulders; they laughed, clinging to Barker's struggling figure; they went out and

laughed with their backs against a tree. They laughed separately and in different corners. And then they came up to Barker with tears in their eyes, dropped their heads on his shoulder, and murmured exhaustedly—

“You blessed ass!”

“But,” said Stacy suddenly, “how did you manage to buy the claim?”

“Ah! that's the most awful thing, boys. I've *never paid for it*,” groaned Barker.

“But Carter sent us the bill of sale,” persisted Demorest, “or we shouldn't have taken it.”

“I gave my promissory note at thirty days,” said Barker desperately, “and where's the money to come from now? But,” he added wildly, as the men glanced at each other—“you said ‘taken it.’ Good heavens! you don't mean to say that I'm *too late*—that you've—you've touched it?”

“I reckon that's pretty much what we *have* been doing,” drawled Demorest.

“It looks uncommonly like it,” drawled Stacy.

Barker glanced blankly from the one to the other. “Shall we pass our young friend in to see the show?” said Demorest to Stacy.

“Yes, if he'll be perfectly quiet and not breathe on the glasses,” returned Stacy.

They each gravely took one of Barker's hands and led him to the corner of the cabin. There, on an old flour barrel, stood a large tin prospecting pan, in which the partners also occasionally used to knead their bread. A dirty towel covered it. Demorest whisked it dexterously aside, and disclosed three large fragments of decomposed gold and quartz. Barker started back.

“Heft it!” said Demorest grimly.

Barker could scarcely lift the pan!

“Four thousand dollars' weight if a penny!” said Stacy

in short staccato sentences. "In a pocket! Brought it out the second stroke of the pick! We'd been awfully blue after you left. Awfully blue, too, when that bill of sale came, for we thought you'd been wasting your money on *us*. Reckoned we oughtn't to take it, but send it straight back to you. Messenger gone! Then Demorest reckoned as it was done it couldn't be undone, and we ought to make just one 'prospect' on the claim, and strike a single stroke for you. And there it is. And there's more on the hillside."

"But it isn't *mine*! It isn't *yours*! It's Carter's. I never had the money to pay for it—and I haven't got it now."

"But you gave the note—and it is not due for thirty days."

A recollection flashed upon Barker. "Yes," he said with thoughtful simplicity, "that's what Kitty said."

"Oh, Kitty said so," said both partners gravely.

"Yes," stammered Barker, turning away with a heightened colour, "and, as I didn't stay there to luncheon, I think I'd better be getting it ready." He picked up the coffee-pot and turned to the hearth as his two partners stepped beyond the door.

"Wasn't it exactly like him?" said Demorest.

"Him all over," said Stacy.

"And his worry over that note?" said Demorest.

"And 'what Kitty said,'" said Stacy.

"Look here! I reckon that wasn't *all* that Kitty said."

"Of course not."

"What luck!"

A Yellow Dog.

I NEVER knew why in the Western States of America a yellow dog should be proverbially considered the acme of canine degradation and incompetency, nor why the possession of one should seriously affect the social standing of its possessor. But the fact being established, I think we accepted it at Rattlers Ridge without question. The matter of ownership was more difficult to settle; and although the dog I have in my mind at the present writing attached himself impartially and equally to every one in camp, no one ventured to exclusively claim ~~him~~; while, after the perpetration of any canine atrocity, everybody repudiated him with indecent haste.

"Well, I can swear he hasn't been near our shanty for weeks," or the retort, "He was last seen comin' out of *your* cabin," expressed the eagerness with which Rattlers Ridge washed its hands of any responsibility. Yet he was by no means a common dog, nor even an unhandsome dog; and it was a singular fact that his severest critics vied with each other in narrating instances of his sagacity, insight, and agility which they themselves had witnessed.

He had been seen crossing the "flume" that spanned Grizzly Cañon, at a height of nine hundred feet, on a plank six inches wide. He had tumbled down the "shoot" to the South Fork, a thousand feet below, and was found sitting on the river bank "without a scratch, 'cept that he was lazily givin' himself with his off hind

paw." He had been forgotten in a snowdrift on a Sierran shelf, and had come home in the early spring with the conceited complacency of an Alpine traveller and a plumpness alleged to have been the result of an exclusive diet of buried mail-bags and their contents. He was generally believed to read the advance election posters, and disappear a day or two before the candidates and the brass band—which he hated—came to the Ridge. He was suspected of having overlooked Colonel Johnson's hand at draw poker, and of having conveyed to the Colonel's adversary, by a succession of barks, the danger of betting against four kings.

While these statements were supplied by wholly unsupported witnesses, it was a very human weakness of Rattlers Ridge that the responsibility of corroboration was passed to *the dog* himself, and he was looked upon as a consummate liar.

"Snoopin' round yere, and *callin'* yourself a poker sharp, are ye? Scoot, you yallor pizin!" was a common adjuration whenever the unfortunate animal intruded upon a card party. "Ef that was a spark, an *atom* of truth in *that dog*, I'd believe my own eyes that I saw him sittin' up and trying to magnetise a jay bird off a tree. But wot are ye goin' to do with a yaller equivocator like that?"

I have said that he was yellow—or, to use the ordinary expression, "yaller." Indeed, I am inclined to believe that much of the ignominy attached to the epithet lay in this favourite pronunciation. Men who habitually spoke of a "*yellow* bird," a "*yellow* hammer," a "*yellow* leaf," always alluded to him as a "*yaller* dog."

He certainly *was* yellow. After a bath—usually compulsory—he presented a decided gamboge streak down his back, from the top of his forehead to the stump of his

tail, fading in his sides and flank to a delicate straw colour. His breast, legs, and feet—when not reddened by “slumgullion,” in which he was fond of wading—were white. A few attempts at ornamental decoration from the Indian-ink pot of the storekeeper failed, partly through the yellow dog’s excessive agility, which would never give the paint time to dry on him, and partly through the success of transferring his markings to the trousers and blankets of the camp.

The size and shape of his tail—which had been cut off before his introduction to Rattlers Ridge—were favourite sources of speculation to the miners, both as determining his breed and his moral responsibility in coming into camp in that defective condition. There was a general opinion that he couldn’t have looked worse with a tail, and its removal was therefore a gratuitous effrontery.

His best feature was his eyes, which were a lustrous Vandyke brown, and sparkling with intelligence; but here again he suffered from evolution through environment, and their original trustful openness was marred by the experience of watching for flying stones, sods, and passing kicks from the rear, so that the pupils were continually reverting to the outer angle of the eyelid.

Nevertheless, none of these characteristics decided the vexed question of his *breed*. His speed and scent pointed to a “hound,” and it is related that on one occasion he was laid on the trail of a wild cat with such success that he followed it apparently out of the State, returning at the end of two weeks, footsore, but blandly contented.

Attaching himself to a prospecting party, he was sent under the same belief “into the brush” to drive off a bear, who was supposed to be haunting the camp fire. He returned in a few minutes *with* the bear, *driving it into* the unarmed circle and scattering the whole party. After this

the theory of his being a hunting dog was abandoned. Yet it was said—on the usual uncorroborated evidence—that he had “put up” a quail; and his qualities as a retriever were for a long time accepted, until, during a shooting expedition for wild ducks, it was discovered that the one he had brought back had never been *shot*, and the party were obliged to compound damages with an adjacent settler.

His fondness for paddling in the ditches and “slumgullion” at one time suggested a water-s spaniel. He could swim and would occasionally bring out of the river sticks and pieces of bark that had been thrown in; but as he always had to be thrown in with them, and was a good-sized dog, his aquatic reputation faded also. He remained simply a “yaller dog.” What more could be said? His actual name was “Bones”—given to him, no doubt, through the provincial custom of confounding the occupation of the individual with his quality, for which it was pointed out precedent could be found in some old English family names.

But if Bones generally exhibited no preference for any particular individual in camp, he always made an exception in favour of drunkards. Even an ordinary roystering bacchanalian party brought him out from under a tree or a shed in the keenest satisfaction. He would accompany them through the long straggling street of the settlement, barking his delight at every step or misstep of the revellers, and exhibiting none of that mistrust of eye which marked his attendance upon the sane and the respectable. He accepted even their uncouth play without a snarl or a yelp, hypocritically pretending even to like it; and I conscientiously believe would have allowed a tin can to be attached to his tail if the hand that tied it on were only unsteady, and the voice that bade him “lie still” were husky with liquor. He would “see” the party cheerfully

into a saloon, wait outside the door—his tongue fairly lolling from his mouth in enjoyment—until they reappeared, permit them even to tumble over him with pleasure, and then gambol away before them, heedless of awkwardly projected stones and epithets. He would afterwards accompany them separately home, or lie with them at cross roads until they were assisted to their cabins. Then he would trot rakishly to his own haunt by the saloon stove, with the slightly conscious air of having been a bad dog, yet of having had a good time.

We never could satisfy ourselves whether his enjoyment arose from some merely selfish conviction that he was more *secure* with the physically and mentally incompetent, from some active sympathy with active wickedness, or from a grim sense of his own mental superiority at such moments. But the general belief leant towards his kindred sympathy as a “yaller dog” with all that was disreputable. And this was supported by another very singular canine manifestation—the “sincere flattery” of simulation or imitation.

“Uncle Billy” Riley for a short time enjoyed the position of being the camp drunkard, and at once became an object of Bones’ greatest solicitude. He not only accompanied him everywhere, curled at his feet or head according to Uncle Billy’s attitude at the moment, but, it was noticed, began presently to undergo a singular alteration in his own habits and appearance. From being an active, tireless scout and forager, a bold and unovertakable marauder, he became lazy and apathetic; allowed gophers to burrow under him without endeavouring to undermine the settlement in his frantic endeavours to dig them out, permitted squirrels to flash their tails at him a hundred yards away, forgot his usual *caches*, and left his favourite bones unburied and bleaching in the sun. His eyes grew dull, his coat lustreless, in proportion as his companion became blear-

eyed and ragged; in running, his usual arrow-like directness began to deviate, and it was not unusual to meet the pair together, zig-zagging up the hill. Indeed, Uncle Billy's condition could be predetermined by Bones' appearance at times when his temporary master was invisible. "The old man must have an awful jag on to-day," was casually remarked when an extra fluffiness and imbecility was noticeable in the passing Bones. At first it was believed that he drank also, but when careful investigation proved this hypothesis untenable, he was freely called a "derned time-servin', yaller hypocrite." Not a few advanced the opinion that if Bones did not actually lead Uncle Billy astray, he at least "slavered him over and coddled him until the old man got conceited in his wickedness." This undoubtedly led to a compulsory divorce between them, and Uncle Billy was happily despatched to a neighbouring town and a doctor.

Bones seemed to miss him greatly, ran away for two days, and was supposed to have visited him, to have been shocked at his convalescence, and to have been "cut" by Uncle Billy in his reformed character; and he returned to his old active life again, and buried his past with his forgotten bones. It was said that he was afterwards detected in trying to lead an intoxicated tramp into camp after the methods employed by a blind man's dog, but was discovered in time by the—of course—uncorroborated narrator.

I should be tempted to leave him thus in his original and picturesque sin, but the same veracity which compelled me to transcribe his faults and iniquities obliges me to describe his ultimate and somewhat monotonous reformation, which came from no fault of his own.

It was a joyous day at Rattlers Ridge that was equally the advent of his change of heart and the first stage coach

that had been induced to diverge from the high-road and stop regularly at our settlement. Flags were flying from the post-office and Polka saloon—and Bones was flying before the brass band that he detested, when the sweetest girl in the county—Pinkey Preston—daughter of the county judge, and hopelessly beloved by all Ratlers Ridge, stepped from the coach which she had glorified by occupying as an invited guest.

"What makes him run away?" she asked quickly, opening her lovely eyes in a possible innocent wonder that anything could be found to run away from her.

"He don't like the brass band," we explained eagerly.

"How funny!" murmured the girl; "is it as out of tune as all that?"

This irresistible witticism alone would have been enough to satisfy us—we did nothing but repeat it to each other all the next day—but we were positively transported when we saw her suddenly gather her dainty skirts in one hand and trip off through the red dust towards Bones, who, with his eyes over his yellow shoulder, had halted in the road, and half turned in mingled disgust and rage at the spectacle of the descending trombone. We held our breath as she approached him. Would Bones evade her as he did us at such moments, or would he save our reputation, and consent, for the moment, to accept her as a new kind of inebriate? She came nearer; he saw her; he began to slowly quiver with excitement—his stump of a tail vibrating with such rapidity that the loss of the missing portion was scarcely noticeable. Suddenly she stopped before him, took his yellow head between her little hands, lifted it, and looked down in his handsome brown eyes with her two lovely blue ones. What passed between them in that magnetic glance no one ever knew. She returned with him; said to him casually: "We're not afraid of brass

bands, are we?" to which he apparently acquiesced, at least stifling his disgust of them, while he was near her—which was nearly all the time.

During the speech-making her gloved hand and his yellow head were always near together, and at the crowning ceremony—her public checking of Yuba Bill's "waybill," on behalf of the township, with a gold pencil, presented to her by the Stage Company—Bones' joy, far from knowing no bounds, seemed to know nothing but them, and he witnessed it apparently in the air. No one dared to interfere. For the first time a local pride in Bones sprang up in our hearts—and we lied to each other in his praises openly and shamelessly.

Then the time came for parting. We were standing by the door of the coach, hats in hand, as Miss Pinkey was about to step into it; Bones was waiting by her side, confidently looking into the interior, and apparently selecting his own seat on the lap of Judge Preston in the corner, when Miss Pinkey held up the sweetest of admonitory fingers. Then, taking his head between her two hands, she again looked into his brimming eyes, and said, simply, "*Good dog,*" with the gentlest of emphasis on the adjective, and popped into the coach.

The six bay horses started as one, the gorgeous green and gold vehicle bounded forward, the red dust rose behind, and the yellow dog danced in and out of it to the very outskirts of the settlement. And then he soberly returned.

A day or two later he was missed—but the fact was afterwards known that he was at Spring Valley, the county town where Miss Preston lived—and he was forgiven. A week afterwards he was missed again, but this time for a longer period, and then a pathetic letter arrived from Sacramento for the storekeeper's wife.

"Would you mind," wrote Miss Pinkey Preston, "asking some of your boys to come over here to Sacramento and bring back Bones? I don't mind having the dear dog walk out with me at Spring Valley, where every one knows me; but here he *does* make one so noticeable, on account of *his colour*. I've got scarcely a frock that he agrees with. He don't go with my pink muslin, and that lovely buff tint he makes three shades lighter. You know yellow is *so* trying."

A consultation was quickly held by the whole settlement, and a deputation sent to Sacramento to relieve the unfortunate girl. We were all quite indignant with Bones—but, oddly enough, I think it was greatly tempered with our new pride in him. While he was with us alone his peculiarities had been scarcely appreciated, but the recurrent phrase, "that yellow dog that they keep at the Rattlers," gave us a mysterious importance along the country-side, as if we had secured a "mascot" in some zoological curiosity.

This was further indicated by a singular occurrence. A new church had been built at the cross roads, and an eminent divine had come from San Francisco to preach the opening sermon. After a careful examination of the camp's wardrobe, and some felicitous exchange of apparel, a few of us were deputed to represent "Rattlers" at the Sunday service. In our white ducks, straw hats, and flannel blouses, we were sufficiently picturesque and distinctive as "honest miners" to be shown off in one of the front pews.

Seated near the prettiest girls, who offered us their hymn-books—in the cleanly odour of fresh pine shavings, and ironed muslin, and blown over by the spices of our own woods through the open windows, a deep sense of the abiding peace of Christian communion settled upon

us. At this supreme moment some one murmured in an awe-stricken whisper—

“ *Will* you look at Bones?”

We looked. Bones had entered the church and gone up in the gallery through a pardonable ignorance and modesty; but, perceiving his mistake, was now calmly walking along the gallery rail before the astounded worshippers. Reaching the end, he paused for a moment, and carelessly looked down. It was about fifteen feet to the floor below—the simplest jump in the world for the mountain-bred Bones. Daintily, gingerly, lazily, and yet with a conceited airiness of manner, as if, humanly speaking, he had one leg in his pocket and were doing it on three, he cleared the distance, dropping just in front of the chancel, without a sound, turned himself around three times, and then lay comfortably down.

Three deacons were instantly in the aisle coming up before the eminent divine, who, we fancied, wore a restrained smile. We heard the hurried whispers: “Belongs to them.” “Quite a local institution here, you know.” “Don’t like to offend sensibilities;” and the minister’s prompt “By no means,” as he went on with his service.

A short month ago we would have repudiated Bones; to-day we sat there in slightly supercilious attitudes, as if to indicate that any affront offered to Bones would be an insult to ourselves, and followed by our instantaneous withdrawal in a body.

All went well, however, until the minister, lifting the large Bible from the communion table and holding it in both hands before him, walked towards a reading-stand by the altar rails. Bones uttered a distinct growl. The minister stopped.

We, and we alone, comprehended in a flash the whole situation. The Bible was nearly the size and shape of one

of those soft clods of sod which we were in the playful habit of launching at Bones when he lay half asleep in the sun, in order to see him cleverly evade it.

We held our breath. What was to be done? But the opportunity belonged to our leader, Jeff Briggs—a confoundedly good-looking fellow, with the golden moustache of a northern viking and the curls of an Apollo. Secure in his beauty and bland in his self-conceit, he rose from the pew, and stepped before the chancel rails.

"I would wait a moment if I were you, sir," he said respectfully, "and you will see that he will go out quietly."

"What is wrong?" whispered the minister in some concern.

"He thinks you are going to heave that book at him, sir, without giving him a fair show, as we do."

The minister looked perplexed, but remained motionless, with the book in his hands. Bones arose, walked half-way down the aisle, and vanished like a yellow flash!

With this justification of his reputation, Bones disappeared for a week. At the end of that time we received a polite note from Judge Preston, saying that the dog had become quite domiciled in their house, and begged that the camp, without yielding up their valuable *property* in him, would allow him to remain at Spring Valley for an indefinite time; that both the judge and his daughter—with whom Bones was already an old friend—would be glad if the members of the camp would visit their old favourite whenever they desired, to assure themselves that he was well cared for.

I am afraid that the bait thus ingenuously thrown out had a good deal to do with our ultimate yielding. However, the reports of those who visited Bones were wonderful and marvellous. He was residing there in state, lying on rugs in the drawing-room, coiled up under the judicial

desk in the judge's study, sleeping regularly on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's bedroom door, or lazily snapping at flies on the judge's lawn.

"He's as yaller as ever," said one of our informants, "but it don't somehow seem to be the same back that we used to break clods over in the old time, just to see him scoot out of the dust."

And now I must record a fact which I am aware all lovers of dogs will indignantly deny, and which will be furiously b^yed at by every faithful hound since the days of Ulysses. Bones not only *forgot*, but absolutely *cut us!* Those who called upon the judge in "store clothes" he would perhaps casually notice, but he would sniff at them as if detecting and resenting them under their superficial exterior. The rest he simply paid no attention to. The more familiar term of "Bonesy"—formerly applied to him, as in our rare moments of endearment—produced no response. This pained, I think, some of the more youthful of us; but, through some strange human weakness, it also increased the camp's respect for him. Nevertheless, we spoke of him familiarly to strangers at the very moment he ignored us. I am afraid that we also took some pains to point out that he was getting fat and unwieldy, and losing his elasticity, implying covertly that his choice was a mistake and his life a failure.

A year after he died, in the odour of sanctity and respectability, being found one morning coiled up and stiff on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's door. When the news was conveyed to us we asked permission, the camp being in a prosperous condition, to erect a stone over his grave. But when it came to the inscription we could only think of the two words murmured to him by Miss Pinkey, which we always believe effected his conversion—

"*Good Dog!*"

A Mother of Five.

SHE was a mother—and a rather exemplary one—of five children, although her own age was barely nine. Two of these children were twins, and she generally alluded to them as "Mr. Amplach's children," referring to an exceedingly respectable gentleman in the next settlement, who, I have reason to believe, had never set eyes on her or them. The twins were quite naturally alike—having been in a previous state of existence two ninepins—and were still somewhat vague and inchoate below their low shoulders in their long clothes, but were also firm and globular about the head, and there were not wanting those who professed to see in this an unmistakable resemblance to their reputed father. The other children were dolls of different ages, sex, and condition, but the twins may be said to have been distinctly her own conception. Yet such was her admirable and impartial maternity that she never made any difference between them. "The Amplach's children" was a description rather than a distinction.

She was herself the motherless child of Robert Foulkes, a hard-working but somewhat improvident teamster on the Express Route between Big Bend and Reno. His daily avocation, when she was not actually with him in the waggon, led to an occasional dispersion of herself and her progeny along the road and at wayside stations between those places. But the family was generally collected together by rough but kindly hands already familiar with

the handling of her children. I have a very vivid recollection of Jim Carter trampling into a saloon, after a five-mile walk through a snowdrift, with an Amplach twin in his pocket. "Suthin' ought to be done," he growled, "to make Meary a little more careful o' them Amplach children; I picked up one outer the snow a mile beyond Big Bend." "God bless my soul!" said a casual passenger, looking up hastily; "I didn't know Mr. Amplach was married." Jim winked diabolically at us over his glass. "No more did I," he responded gloomily, "but you can't tell anything about the ways o' them respectable, psalm-singing jay birds." Having thus disposed of Amplach's character, later on, when he was alone with Mary, or "Meary," as she chose to pronounce it, the rascal worked upon her feelings with an account of the infant Amplach's sufferings in the snowdrift and its agonised whisperings for "Meary! Meary!" until real tears stood in Mary's blue eyes. "Let this be a lesson to you," he concluded, drawing the nine-pin dexterously from his pocket, "for it took nigh a quart of the best forty-rod whisky to bring that child to." Not only did Mary firmly believe him, but for weeks afterwards "Julian Amplach"—this unhappy twin—was kept in a somnolent attitude in the cart, and was believed to have contracted dissipated habits from the effects of his heroic treatment.

Her numerous family was achieved in only two years, and succeeded her first child, which was brought from Sacramento at considerable expense by a Mr. William Dodd, also a teamster, on her seventh birthday. This, by one of those rare inventions known only to a child's vocabulary, she at once called "Misery"—probably a combination of "Missy," as she herself was formerly termed by strangers, and "Missouri," her native State. It was an excessively large doll at first—Mr. Dodd wishing to get the worth of his money—but time, and perhaps an

excess of maternal care, remedied the defect, and it lost flesh and certain unemployed parts of its limbs very rapidly. It was further reduced in bulk by falling under the waggon and having the whole train pass over it, but singularly enough its greatest attenuation was in the head and shoulders—the complexion peeling off as a solid layer, followed by the disappearance of distinct strata of its extraordinary composition. This continued until the head and shoulders were much too small for even its reduced frame, and all the devices of childish millinery—a shawl secured with tacks and well hammered in, and a hat which tilted backwards and forwards and never appeared at the same angle—failed to restore symmetry. Until one dreadful morning, after an imprudent bath, the whole upper structure disappeared, leaving two hideous iron prongs standing erect from the spinal column. Even an imaginative child like Mary could not accept this sort of thing as a head. Later in the day Jack Roper, the blacksmith at the "Crossing," was concerned at the plaintive appearance, before his forge, of a little girl, clad in a bright blue pinafore of the same colour as her eyes, carrying her monstrous offspring in her arms. Jack recognised her and instantly divined the situation. "You haven't," he suggested kindly, "got another head at home—suthin' left over?" Mary shook her head sadly; even her prolific maternity was not equal to the creation of children in detail. "Nor anythin' like a head?" he persisted sympathetically. Mary's loving eyes filled with tears. "No, nuffen!" "You couldn't," he continued thoughtfully, "use her the other side up?—we might get a fine pair o' legs outer them irons," he added, touching the two prongs with artistic suggestion. "Now look here——"; he was about to tilt the doll over when a small cry of feminine distress and a swift movement of a matronly little arm arrested the

evident indiscretion. "I see," he said gravely. "Well, you come here to-morrow, and we'll fix up suthin' to work her." Jack was thoughtful the rest of the day, more than usually impatient with certain stubborn mules to be shod, and even knocked off work an hour earlier to walk to Big Bend and a rival shop. But the next morning when the trustful and anxious mother appeared at the forge she uttered a scream of delight. Jack had neatly joined a hollow iron globe, taken from the newel-post of some old iron staircase railing, to the two prongs and covered it with a coat of red fire-proof paint. It was true that its complexion was rather high, that it was inclined to be top-heavy, and that in the long run the other dolls suffered considerably by enforced association with this unyielding and implacable head and shoulders, but this did not diminish Mary's joy over her restored first-born. Even its utter absence of features was no defect in a family where features were as evanescent as in hers, and the most ordinary student of evolution could see that the "Amplach" ninepins were in legitimate succession to the globular-headed "Misery." For a time I think that Mary even preferred her to the others. Howbeit it was a pretty sight to see her on a summer afternoon sitting upon a wayside stump, her other children dutifully ranged around her, and the hard, unfeeling head of Misery pressed deep down into her loving little heart, as she swayed from side to side, crooning her plaintive lullaby. Small wonder that the bees took up the song and droned a slumberous accompaniment, or that high above her head the enormous pines, stirred through their depths by the soft Sierran air—or Heaven knows what—let slip flickering lights and shadows to play over that cast-iron face, until the child, looking down upon it with the quick, transforming power of love, thought that it smiled.

The two remaining members of the family were less distinctive. "Gloriana"—pronounced as two words: "Glory Anna"—being the work of her father, who also named it, was simply a cylindrical roll of canvas waggon-covering, girt so as to define a neck and waist, with a rudely inked face—altogether a weak, pitiable, man-like invention; and "Johnny Dear," alleged to be the representative of John Doremus, a young storekeeper who occasionally supplied Mary with gratuitous sweets. Mary never admitted this, and, as we were all gentlemen along that road, we were blind to the suggestion. "Johnny Dear" was originally a small, plaster phrenological cast of a head and bust, begged from some shop window in the county town, with a body clearly constructed by Mary herself. It was an ominous fact that it was always dressed as a *boy*, and was distinctly the most *human*-looking of all her progeny. Indeed, in spite of the faculties that were legibly printed all over its smooth, white, hairless head, it was appallingly life-like. Left sometimes by Mary astride of the branch of a wayside tree, horsemen had been known to dismount hurriedly and examine it, returning with a mystified smile, and it was on record that Yuba Bill had once pulled up the Pioneer Coach at the request of curious and imploring passengers, and then grimly installed "Johnny Dear" beside him on the box seat, publicly delivering him to Mary at Big Bend, to her wide-eyed confusion and the first blush we had ever seen on her round, chubby, sunburnt cheeks. It may seem strange that, with her great popularity and her well-known maternal instincts, she had not been kept fully supplied with proper and more conventional dolls; but it was soon recognised that she did not care for them—left their waxen faces, rolling eyes, and abundant hair in ditches, or stripped them to help clothe the more extravagant creatures of her fancy. So it came that "Johnny

Dear's" strictly classical profile looked out from under a girl's fashionable straw sailor hat, to the utter obliteration of his prominent intellectual faculties; the Amplach twins wore bonnets on their ninepin heads, and even an attempt was made to fit a flaxen scalp on the iron-headed Misery. But her dolls were always a creation of her own—her affection for them increasing with the demand upon her imagination. This may seem somewhat inconsistent with her habit of occasionally abandoning them in the woods or in the ditches. But she had an unbounded confidence in the kindly maternity of Nature, and trusted *her* children to the breast of the Great Mother as freely as she did herself in her own motherlessness. And this confidence was rarely betrayed. Rats, mice, snails, wild cats, panther and bear, never touched her lost waifs. Even the elements were kindly; an Amplach twin buried under a snowdrift in high altitudes reappeared smilingly in the spring in all its wooden and painted integrity. We were all Pantheists then—and believed this implicitly. It was only when exposed to the milder forces of civilisation that Mary had anything to fear. Yet even then, when Patsey O'Connor's domestic goat had once tried to "sample" the lost Misery, he had retreated with the loss of three front teeth, and Thompson's mule came out of an encounter with that iron-headed prodigy with a sprained hind leg and a cut and swollen pastern.

But these were the simple Arcadian days of the road between Big Bend and Reno, and progress and prosperity, alas! brought changes in their wake. It was already whispered that Mary ought to be going to school, and Mr. Amplach—still happily oblivious of the liberties taken with his name—as trustee of the public school at Dockville, had intimated that Mary's Bohemian wanderings were a scandal to the county. She was growing up in ignorance, a dreadful

ignorance of everything but the chivalry, the deep tenderness, the delicacy and unselfishness of the rude men around her, and obliviousness of faith in anything but the immeasurable bounty of Nature towards her and her children. Of course there was a fierce discussion between "the boys" of the road and the few married families of the settlement on this point, but, of course, progress and "snivelisation"—as the boys chose to call it—triumphed. The projection of a railroad settled it; Robert Foulkes, promoted to a foremanship of a division of the line, was made to understand that his daughter must be educated. But the terrible question of Mary's family remained. No school would open its doors to that heterogeneous collection, and Mary's little heart would have broken over the rude dispersal or heroic burning of her children. The ingenuity of Jack Roper suggested a compromise. She was allowed to select one to take to school with her; the others were *adopted* by certain of her friends, and she was to be permitted to visit them every Saturday afternoon. The selection was a cruel trial, so cruel that, knowing her undoubted preference for her first-born, Misery, we would not have interferred for worlds, but in her unexpected choice of "Johnny Dear" the most unworldly of us knew that it was the first glimmering of seminine tact—her first submission to the world of propriety that she was now entering. "Johnny Dear" was undoubtedly the most presentable; even more, there was an educational suggestion in its prominent, mapped-out phrenological organs. The adopted fathers were loyal to their trust. Indeed, for years afterwards the blacksmith kept the iron-headed Misery on a rude shelf, like a shrine, near his bunk; nobody but himself and Meary ever knew the secret, stolen, and thrilling interviews that took place during the first days of their separation. Certain facts, however, transpired concerning Mary's equal faithfulness to

another of her children. It is said that one Saturday afternoon, when the road manager of the new line was seated in his office at Reno in private business discussion with two directors, a gentle tap was heard at the door. It was opened to an eager little face, a pair of blue eyes, and a blue pinafore. To the astonishment of the directors, a change came over the face of the manager. Taking the child gently by the hand, he walked to his desk, on which the papers of the new line were scattered, and drew open a drawer from which he took a large ninepin extraordinarily dressed as doll. The astonishment of the two gentlemen was increased at the following quaint colloquy between the manager and the child :—

"She's doing remarkably well in spite of the trying weather, but I have had to keep her very quiet," said the manager, regarding the ninepin critically.

"Ess," said Mary quickly. "It's just the same with Johnny Dear ; his cough is f'ightful at nights. But Misery's all right. I've just been to see her."

"There's a good deal of scarlet fever around," continued the manager with quiet concern, "and we can't be too careful. But I shall take her for a little run down the line to-morrow."

The eyes of Mary sparkled and overflowed like blue water. Then there was a kiss, a little laugh, a shy glance at the two curious strangers, the blue pinafore fluttered away, and the colloquy ended. She was equally attentive in her care of the others, but the rag baby "Gloriana," who had found a home in Jim Carter's cabin at the Ridge, living too far for daily visits, was brought down regularly on Saturday afternoon to Mary's house by Jim, tucked in asleep in his saddle-bags or riding gallantly before him on the horn of his saddle. On Sunday there was a dress parade of all the dolls, which kept Mary in heart for the next week's desolation.

But there came one Saturday and Sunday when Mary did not appear, and it was known along the road that she had been called to San Francisco to meet an aunt who had just arrived from "the States." It was a vacant Sunday to "the boys," a very hollow, unsanctified Sunday, somehow, without that little figure. But the next Sunday, and the next, were still worse, and then it was known that the dreadful aunt was making much of Mary, and was sending her to a grand school—a convent at Santa Clara—where it was rumoured girls were turned out so accomplished that their own parents did not know them. But *we* know that was impossible to our Mary; and a letter which came from her at the end of the month, and before the convent had closed upon the blue pinafore, satisfied us, and was balm to our anxious hearts. It was characteristic of Mary; it was addressed to nobody in particular, and would—but for the prudence of the aunt—have been entrusted to the post-office open and undirected. It was a single sheet, handed to us without a word by her father; but, as we passed it from hand to hand, we understood it as if we had heard our lost playfellow's voice.

"Thers more houses in 'Frisco than you kin shake a stick at and wimmens till you kant rest, but mules and jakasses ain't got no sho, nor blacksmiffs shops, wich is not to be seen no wear. Rapits and Skwirls also bares and pansers is on-noun and unforgotten on account of the streets and Sunday skoles. Jim Roper you orter be very good to Mizzy on a kount of my not bein here, and not harten your hart to her bekos she is top heavy—which is ontroo and simptly an imptient lie—like you allus make. I have a kinary bird wot sings deliteful—but isn't a yellerhamer sutch as I know, as youd think. Dear Mister Montgomery, dont keep Gulam Amplak to mutch shet up in office drors; it isnt good for his lungs and chest. And

don't you ink his head—nother! you're as bad as the rest. Johnny Dear, you must be very kind to your adopted father, and you, Glory Anna, must lov your kind Jimmy Carter verry mutch for taking you hossback so offen. I has been buggy ridin with an orficer who has killed injuns real! I am comin back soon with grate affeckshun, so luke out and mind."

But it was three years before she returned, and this was her last and only letter. The "adopted fathers" of her children were faithful, however, and when the new line was opened, and when it was understood that she was to be present with her father at the ceremony, they came, with a common understanding, to the station to meet their old playmate. They were ranged along the platform—poor Jack Roper a little overweighted with a bundle he was carrying on his left arm. And then a young girl in the freshness of her teens and the spotless purity of a muslin frock, that although brief in skirt was perfect in fit, faultlessly booted and gloved, tripped from the train, and offered a delicate hand in turn to each of her old friends. Nothing could be prettier than the smile on the cheeks that were no longer sunburnt; nothing could be clearer than the blue eyes lifted frankly to theirs. And yet, as she gracefully turned away with her father, the faces of the four adopted parents were found to be as red and embarrassed as her own on the day that Yuba Bill drove up publicly with "Johnny Dear" on the box seat.

"You weren't such a fool," said Jack Montgomery to Roper, "as to bring 'Misery' here with you?"

"I was," said Roper with a constrained laugh,—"and you?" He had just caught sight of the head of a ninepin peeping from the manager's pocket. The man laughed, and then the four turned silently away.

"Mary" had indeed come back to them; but not "The Mother of Five!"

Bulger's Reputation.

WE all remembered very distinctly Bulger's advent in Rattlesnake Camp. It was during the rainy season—a season singularly inducive to settled reflective impressions as we sat and smoked around the stove in Mosby's grocery. Like older and more civilised communities, we had our periodic waves of sentiment and opinion, with the exception that they were more evanescent with us, and, as we had just passed through a fortnight of dissipation and extravagance, owing to a visit from some gamblers and speculators, we were now undergoing a severe moral revolution, partly induced by reduced finances and partly by the arrival of two families with grown-up daughters on the hill. It was raining, with occasional warm breaths, through the open window, of the south-west trades, redolent of the saturated spices of the woods and springing grasses, which perhaps were slightly inconsistent with the hot stove around which we had congregated. But the stove was only an excuse for our listless, gregarious gathering; warmth and idleness went well together, and it was currently accepted that we had caught from the particular reptile which gave its name to our camp much of its pathetic, lifelong search for warmth, and its habits of indolently basking in it.

A few of us still went through the affectation of attempting to dry our damp clothes by the stove, and sizzling our wet boots against it; but as the same individuals calmly permitted the rain to drive in upon them through the open

window without moving, and seemed to take infinite delight in the amount of steam they generated, even that pretence dropped. *Crotalus* himself, with his tail in a muddy ditch, and the sun striking cold fire from his slit eyes as he basked his head on a warm stone beside it, could not have typified us better.

Percy Briggs took his pipe from his mouth at last and said, with reflective severity—

“Well, gentlemen, if we can’t get the waggon road over here, and if we’re going to be left out by the stage coach company, we can at least straighten up the camp, and not have it look like a cross between a tenement alley and a broken-down circus. I declare I was just sick when these two Baker girls started to make a short cut through the camp. Darned if they didn’t turn round and take to the woods and the Rattler’s again afore they got half-way. And that benighted idiot Tom Rollins, standin’ there in the ditch, spattered all over with slumgullion ‘til he looked like a spotted tarrypin, wavin’ his fins and sashaying backwards and forrards and saying ‘This way, ladies ; this way !’”

“I didn’t,” returned Tom Rollins quite casually, without looking up from his steaming boots ; “I didn’t start in night afore last to dance ‘The Green Corn Dance’ outer ‘Hiawatha,’ with feathers in my hair and a red blanket on my shoulders, round that family’s new potato patch, in order that it might ‘increase and multiply.’ I didn’t sing ‘Sabbath Morning Bells’ with an anvil accompaniment until twelve o’clock at night over at the Crossing, so that they might dream of their Happy Childhood’s Home. It seems to me that it wasn’t *me* did it. I might be mistaken—it was late—but I have the impression that it wasn’t *me*.”

From the silence that followed this would seem to have been clearly a recent performance of the previous speaker, who, however, responded quite cheerfully—

"An evenin' o' simple, childish gaiety don't count. We've got to start again *fair*. What we want here is to clear up and encourage decent immigration, and get rid o' gamblers and blatherskites that are makin' this yer camp their happy hunting-ground. We don't want any more permiskus shootin'. We don't want any more paintin' the town red. We don't want any more swaggerin' galoots ridin' up to this grocery and emptyin' their six-shooters in the air afore they 'light. We want to put a stop to it peacefully and without a row—and we kin. We ain't got no bullies of our own to fight back, and they know it, so they know they won't get no credit bullyin' us; they'll leave, if we're only firm. It's ail along of our cussed fool good-nature; they see it amuses us, and they'll keep it up as long as the whisky's free. What we want to do is, when the next man comes waltzin' along——"

A distant clatter from the rocky hillside here mingled with the puff of damp air through the window.

"Looks as ef we might hev a show even now," said Tom Rollins, removing his feet from the stove as we all instinctively faced towards the window.

"I reckon you're in with us in this, Mosby?" said Briggs, turning towards the proprietor of the grocery, who had been leaning listlessly against the wall behind his bar.

"Arter the man's had a fair show," said Mosby cautiously. He deprecated the prevailing condition of things, but it was still an open question whether the families would prove as valuable customers as his present clients. "Everything in moderation, gentlemen."

The sound of galloping hoofs came nearer, now swishing in the soft mud of the highway, until the unseen rider pulled up before the door. There was no shouting, however, nor did he announce himself with the usual salvo of fire-arms. But when, after a singularly heavy tread and

the jingle of spurs on the platform, the door flew open to the new-comer, he seemed a realisation of our worst expectations. Tall, broad, and muscular, he carried in one hand a shot-gun, while from his hip dangled a heavy navy revolver. His long hair, unkempt but oiled, swept a greasy circle around his shoulders; his enormous moustache, dripping with wet, completely concealed his mouth. His costume of fringed buckskin was wild and *outré* even for our frontier camp. But what was more confirmative of our suspicions was that he was evidently in the habit of making an impression, and after a distinct pause at the doorway, with only a side glance at us, he strode towards the bar.

"As there don't seem to be no hotel hereabouts, I reckon I kin put up my mustang here and have a shake-down somewhere behind that counter," he said. His voice seemed to have added to its natural depth the hoarseness of frequent over-straining.

"Ye ain't got no bunk to spare, you boys, hev ye?" asked Mosby evasively, glancing at Percy Briggs, without looking at the stranger. We all looked at Briggs also; it was *his* affair after all—he had originated this opposition. To our surprise he said nothing.

The stranger leaned heavily on the counter.

"I was speaking to *you*," he said, with his eyes on Mosby, and slightly accenting the pronoun with a tap of his revolver-butt on the bar. "Ye don't seem to catch on."

Mosby smiled feebly, and again cast an imploring glance at Briggs. To our greater astonishment, Briggs said quietly: "Why don't you answer the stranger, Mosby?"

"Yes, yes," said Mosby suavely, to the new-comer, while an angry flush crossed his cheek as he recognised the position in which Briggs had placed him. "Of course, you're welcome to what doings *I* hev here, but I reckoned

these gentlemen over there," with a vicious glance at Briggs, "might fix ye up suthin' better; they're so pow'ful kind to your sort."

The stranger threw down a gold piece on the counter and said: "Fork out your whisky, then," waited until his glass was filled, took it in his hand, and then, drawing an empty chair to the stove, sat down beside Briggs. "Seein' as you're that kind," he said, placing his heavy hand on Briggs's knee, "mebbe ye kin tell me ef thar's a shanty or a cabin at Rattlesnake that I kin get for a couple o' weeks. I saw an empty one at the head o' the hill. You see, gennelmen," he added confidentially, as he swept the drops of whisky from his long moustache with his fingers and glanced around our group, "I've got some business over at Bigwood" (our nearest town), "but ez a place to *stay at* it ain't my style."

"What's the matter with Bigwood?" said Briggs abruptly.

"It's too howlin', too festive, too rough; thar's too much yellin' and shootin' goin' day and night. Thar's too many card sharps and gay gamboleirs cavortin' about the town to please me. Too much permiskus soakin' at the bar and free jim-jams. What I want is a quiet place whar a man kin give his mind and elbow a rest from betwixt grippin' his shootin'-irons and crookin' in his whisky. A sort o' slow, quiet, easy place *like this.*"

We all stared at him, Percy Briggs as fixedly as any. But there was not the slightest trace of irony, sarcasm, or peculiar significance in his manner. He went on slowly—

"When I struck this yer camp a minit ago; when I seed that thar ditch meanderin' peaceful like through the street, without a hotel or free saloon or express office on either side; with the smoke just a curlin' over the chimbley of that log shanty, and the bresh just set fire to and a smoulderin' in that potato patch with a kind o' old-time

stingin' in your eyes and nose, and a few women's duds just a flutterin' on a line by the fence, I says to myself: 'Bulger—this is peace! This is wot you're lookin' for, Bulger—this is wot you're wantin'—this is wot *you'll hav'.*'"

"You say you've business over at Bigwood. What business?" said Briggs.

"It's a peculiar business, young fellow," returned the stranger gravely. "Thar's different men ez has different opinions about it. Some allows it's an easy business, some allows it's a rough business; some says it's a sad business, others says it's gay and festive. Some wonders ez how I've got into it, and others wonder how I'll ever get out of it. It's a payin' business—it's a peaceful sort o' business when left to itself. It's a peculiar business—a business that sort o' b'longs to me, though I ain't got no patent from Washington for it. It's *my own* business." He paused, rose, and saying, "Let's meander over and take a look at that empty cabin, and ef she suits me, why, I'll plank down a slug for her on the spot, and move in to-morrow," walked towards the door. "I'll pick up suthin' in the way o' boxes and blankets from the grocery," he added, looking at Mosby, "and ef that's a corner whar I kin stand my gun and a nail to hang up my revolver—why, I'm all that!"

By this time we were no longer astonished when Briggs rose also, and not only accompanied the sinister-looking stranger to the empty cabin, but assisted him in negotiating with its owner for a fortnight's occupancy. Nevertheless, we eagerly assailed Briggs on his return for some explanation of this singular change in his attitude towards the stranger. He coolly reminded us, however, that while his intention of excluding ruffianly adventurers from the camp remained the same, he had no right to go back on the stranger's sentiments, which were evidently in accord with

our own, and although Mr. Bulger's appearance was inconsistent with them, that was only an additional reason why we should substitute a mild firmness for that violence which we all deprecated, but which might attend his abrupt dismissal. We were all satisfied except Mosby, who had not yet recovered from Briggs's change of front, which he was pleased to call "craw-fishing." "Seemed to me his account of his business was extraordinary satisfactory. Sorter filled the bill all round—no mistake thar"—he suggested, with a malicious irony. "I like a man that's outspoken."

"I understand him very well," said Briggs quietly.

"In course you did. Only when you've settled in *your* mind whether he was describing horse-stealing or tract-distributing, mebbe you'll let *me* know."

It would seem, however, that Briggs did not interrogate the stranger again regarding it, nor did we, who were quite content to leave matters in Briggs's hands. Enough that Mr. Bulger moved into the empty cabin the next day, and, with the aid of a few old boxes from the grocery, which he quickly extemporised into tables and chairs, and the purchase of some necessary cooking utensils, soon made himself at home. The rest of the camp, now thoroughly aroused, made a point of leaving their work in the ditches, whenever they could, to stroll carelessly around Bulger's tenement in the vague hope of satisfying a curiosity that had become tormenting. But they could not find that he was doing anything of a suspicious character—except, perhaps, from the fact that it was not *outwardly* suspicious, which I grieve to say did not lull them to security. He seemed to be either fixing up his cabin or smoking in his doorway. On the second day he checked this itinerant curiosity by taking the initiative himself, and quietly walking from claim to claim and from cabin to cabin with

a pacific but by no means a satisfying interest. The shadow of his tall figure carrying his inseparable gun, which had not yet apparently "stood in the corner," falling upon an excavated bank beside the delving miners, gave them a sense of uneasiness they could not explain; a few characteristic yells of boisterous hilarity from their noon-tide gathering under a cotton-wood somehow ceased when Mr. Bulger was seen gravely approaching, and his casual stopping before a poker party in the gulch actually caused one of the most reckless gamblers to weakly recede from a "bluff," and allow his adversary to sweep the board. After this it was felt that matters were becoming serious. There was no subsequent patrolling of the camp before the stranger's cabin. Their curiosity was singularly abated. A general feeling of repulsion, kept within bounds partly by the absence of any overt act from Bulger, and partly by an inconsistent over-consciousness of his shot-gun, took its place. But an unexpected occurrence revived it.

One evening, as the usual social circle were drawn around Mosby's stove, the lazy silence was broken by the familiar sounds of pistol-shots and a series of more familiar shrieks and yells from the rocky hill-road. The circle quickly recognised the voices of their old friends the roysterers and gamblers from Sawyer's Dam; they as quickly recognised the returning shouts here and there from a few companions who were welcoming them. I grieve to say that in spite of their previous attitude of reformation a smile of gratified expectancy lit up the faces of the younger members, and even the older ones glanced dubiously at Briggs. Mosby made no attempt to conceal a sigh of relief as he carefully laid out an extra supply of glasses in his bar. Suddenly the oncoming yells ceased, the wild gallop of hoofs slackened into a trot, and finally halted, and even the responsive shouts of the camp stopped also. We all

looked vacantly at each other; Mosby leaped over his counter and went to the door; Briggs followed with the rest of us. The night was dark, and it was a few minutes before we could distinguish a straggling, vague, but silent procession moving through the moist, heavy air on the hill. But, to our surprise, it was moving *away* from us—absolutely *leaving* the camp! We were still staring in expectancy when out of the darkness slowly emerged a figure which we recognised at once as Captain Jim, one of the most reckless members of our camp. Pushing us back into the grocery he entered without a word, closed the door behind him, and threw himself vacantly into a chair. We at once pressed around him. He looked up at us dazed, drew a long breath, and said slowly—

“It’s no use, gentlemen! Suthin’s *got* to be done with that Bulger; and mighty quick.”

“What’s the matter?” we asked eagerly.

“Matter!” he repeated, passing his hand across his forehead. “Matter! Look yere! Ye all of you heard them boys from Sawyer’s Dam coming over the hill? Ye heard their music—mebbe ye heard *us* join in the chorus? Well, on they came waltzing down the hill, like old times, and we waitin’ for ‘em. Then, jest as they passed the old cabin, who do you think they ran right into—shooting-iron, long hair and moustache, and all that—standing there plump in the road?—why, Bulger!”

“Well?”

“Well!—Whatever it was—don’t ask *me*—but, dern my skin, ef after a word or two from *him*—them boys just stopped yellin’, turned round like lambs, and rode away, peaceful-like, along with him. We ran after them a spell, still yellin’, when that thar Bulger faced around, said to us that he’d ‘come down here for quiet,’ and ef he couldn’t hev it he’d have to leave with these gentlemen *who wanted*

it too! And I'm gosh darned ef those *gentlemen*—you know 'em all—Patsey Carpenter, Snap-shot Harry, and the others—ever said a darned word, but kinder nodded 'So long' and went away!"

Our astonishment and mystification were complete; and, I regret to say, the indignation of Captain Jim and Mosby equally so. "If we're going to be bossed by the first newcomer," said the former gloomily, "I reckon we might as well take our chances with the Sawyer's Dam boys, whom we know."

"Ef we are going to hev the legitimate trade of Rattlesnake interfered with by the cranks of some hidin' horse-thief or retired road-agent," said Mosby, "we might as well invite the hull of Joaquin Murietta's gang here at once! But I suppose this is part o' Bulger's particular 'business,'" he added, with a withering glance at Briggs.

"I understand it all," said Briggs quietly. "You know I told you that bullies couldn't live in the same camp together. That's human nature—and that's how plain men like you and me manage to scud along without getting plugged. You see, Bulger wasn't going to hev any of his own kind jumpin' his claim here. And I reckon he was pow'ful enough to back down Sawyer's Dam. Anyhow, the bluff told—and here we are in peace and quietness."

"Until he lets us know what *is* his little game," sneered Mosby.

Nevertheless, such is the force of mysterious power that, although it was exercised against what we firmly believed was the independence of the camp, it extorted a certain respect from us. A few thought it was not a bad thing to have a professional bully, and even took care to relate the discomfiture of the wicked youth of Sawyer's Dam for the benefit of a certain adjacent and powerful camp who

had looked down upon us. He, himself, returning the same evening from his self-imposed escort, vouchsafed no other reason than the one he had already given. Preposterous as it seemed, we were obliged to accept it, and the still more preposterous inference that he had sought Rattlesnake Camp solely for the purpose of acquiring and securing its peace and quietness. Certainly he had no other occupation ; the little work he did upon the tailings or the abandoned claim which went with his little cabin was scarcely a pretence. He rode over on certain days to Bigwood on account of his business, but no one had ever seen him there, nor could the description of his manner and appearance evoke any information from the Bigwoodians. It remained a mystery.

It had also been feared that the advent of Bulger would intensify that fear and dislike of riotous Rattlesnake which the two families had shown, and which was the origin of Briggs's futile attempt at reformation. But it was discovered that since his arrival the young girls had shown less timidity in entering the camp, and had even exchanged some polite conversation and good-humoured badinage with its younger and more impressible members. Perhaps this tended to make these youths more observant, for a few days later, when the vexed question of Bulger's business was again under discussion, one of them, remarked gloomily—

“I reckon there ain’t no doubt *what* he’s here for !”

The youthful prophet was instantly sat upon after the fashion of all elderly critics since Job’s. Nevertheless, after a pause he was permitted to explain.

“Only this morning, when Lance Forester and me were chirping with them gals out on the hill, who should we see hanging around in the bush but that cussed Bulger ! We allowed at first that it might be only a new style of his

interferin', so we took no notice, except to pass a few remarks about listeners and that sort o' thing, and perhaps to bedevil the girls a little more than we'd hev done if we'd been alone. Well, they laughed, and we laughed—and that was the end of it. But this afternoon, as Lance and me were meandering down by their cabin, we sorter turned into the woods to wait till they'd come out. Then all of a sudden Lance stopped as rigid as a pointer that's flushed somethin', and says, 'B'gosh!' And thar, under a big redwood, sat that slimy hypocrite Bulger, twisting his long moustaches and smiling like clockwork alongside o' little Meely Baker—you know her, the pootiest of the two sisters—and she smilin' back on him. Think of it!—that unknown, unwashed, long-haired tramp and bully, who must be forty if a day, and that innocent gal of sixteen. It was simply disgustin'!"

I need not say that the older cynics and critics already alluded to at once improved the occasion. - What more could be expected? Women, the world over, were noted for this sort of thing! This long-haired, swaggering bully, with his air of mystery, had captivated them, as he always had done since the days of Homer. Simple merit, which sat lowly in bar-rooms, and conceived projects for the public good around the humble, unostentatious stove, was nowhere! Youth could not too soon learn this bitter lesson. And in this case youth too, perhaps, was right in its conjectures, for this *was*, no doubt, the little game of the perfidious Bulger. We recalled the fact that his unhallowed appearance in camp was almost coincident with the arrival of the two families. We glanced at Briggs; to our amazement, for the first time he looked seriously concerned. But Mosby in the meantime leaned his elbows lazily over the counter and, in a slow voice, added fuel to the flame.

"I wouldn't hev spoken of it before," he said, with a sidelong glance at Briggs, "for it might be all in the linc o' Bulger's 'business,' but suthin' happened the other night that, for a minit, got me! I was passin' the Bakers' shanty, and I heard one of them gals a-singing a camp-meeting hymn. I don't calkilate to run agin you young sellers in any sparkin' or canoodlin' that's goin' on, but her voice sounded so pow'ful soothin' and pretty that I jest stood there and listened. Then the old woman—old Mother Baker—*she* joined in, and I listened too. And then—dern my skin!—but a man's voice joined in—jest belching outer that cabin!—and I sorter listed myself up and kem away. That voice, gentlemen," said Mosby, lingering artistically as he took up a glass and professionally eyed it before wiping it with his towel, "that voice, cumf'bly fixed that in thet cabin among them wimen folks, was Bulger's!"

Briggs got up, with his eyes looking the darker for his flushed face. "Gentlemen," he said huskily, "thar's only one thing to be done. A lot of us have got to ride over to Sawyer's Dam to-morrow morning and pick up as many square men as we can muster; there's a big camp meeting goin' on there, and there won't be no difficulty in that. When we've got a big enough crowd to show we mean business we must march back here and ride Bulger out of this camp! I don't hanker arter Vigilance Committees, as a rule—it's a rough remedy—it's like drinkin' a quart o' whisky agin rattlesnake poison—but it's got to be done! We don't mind being *sold* ourselves—but when it comes to our standin' by and seein' the only innocent people in Rattlesnake given away—we kick! Bulger's got to be fired outer this camp! And he will be!"

But he was not.

For when, the next morning, a determined and thoughtful

procession of the best and most characteristic citizens of Rattlesnake Camp filed into Sawyer's Dam they found that their mysterious friends had disappeared, although they met with a fraternal but subdued welcome from the general camp. But any approach to the subject of their visit, however, was received with a chilling disapproval. Did they not know that lawlessness of any kind, even under the rude mantle of frontier justice, was to be deprecated and scouted when a "means of salvation, a power of regeneration," such as was now sweeping over Sawyer's Dam, was at hand? Could they not induce this man who was to be violently deported to accompany them willingly to Sawyer's Dam and subject himself to the powerful influence of the "revival" then in full swing?

The Rattlesnake boys laughed bitterly, and described the man of whom they talked so lightly; but in vain. "It's no use, gentlemen," said a more worldly bystander, in a lower voice, "the camp meetin's got a strong grip here, and betwixt you and me there ain't no wonder. For the man that runs it—the big preacher—has got new ways and methods that fetches the boys every time. He don't preach no cut-and-dried gospel; he don't carry around no slop-shop robes and clap 'em on you whether they fit or not; but he samples and measures the camp afore he wades into it. He scouts and examines; he ain't no mere Sunday preacher with a comfortable house and once-a-week church, but he gives up his days and nights to it, and makes his family work with him, and even sends 'em forward to explore the field. And he ain't no white choker shadbelly either, but fits himself, like his gospel, to the men he works among. Ye ought to hear him afore you go. His tent is just out your way. I'll go with you."

Too dejected to offer any opposition, and perhaps a little curious to see this man who had unwittingly frus-

trated their design of lynching Bulger, they haulted at the outer fringe of worshippers who packed the huge enclosure. They had not time to indulge their cynicisms over this swaying mass of emotional, half-thinking, and almost irresponsible beings, nor to detect any similarity between *their* extreme methods and the scheme of redemption they themselves were seeking, for in a few moments, apparently lifted to his feet on a wave of religious exaltation, the famous preacher arose. The men of Rattlesnake gasped for breath.

It was Bulger!

But Briggs quickly recovered himself. "By what name," said he, turning passionately towards his guide, "does this man—this impostor—call himself here?"

"Baker."

"Baker?" echoed the Rattlesnake contingent.

"Baker?" repeated Lance Forester, with a ghastly smile.

"Yes," returned their guide. "You oughter know it too! For he sent his wife and daughters over, after his usual style, to sample your camp, a week ago! Come, now, what are you givin' us?"

In the Tules.

HE had never seen a steamboat in his life. Born and reared in one of the Western Territories, far from a navigable river, he had only known the "dug-out" or canoe as a means of conveyance across the scant streams whose fordable waters made even those scarcely a necessity. The long, narrow, hooded waggon, drawn by swaying oxen, known familiarly as a "prairie schooner," in which he journeyed across the plains to California in '53, did not help his conception by that nautical figure. And when at last he dropped upon the land of promise through one of the Southern mountain passes, he halted all unconsciously upon the low banks of a great yellow river amidst a tangled brake of strange, reed-like grasses that were unknown to him. The river, broadening as it debouched through many channels into a lordly bay, seemed to him the *ultima thule* of his journeyings. Unyoking his oxen on the edge of the luxuriant meadows which blended with scarcely any line of demarcation into the great stream itself, he found the prospect "good" according to his lights and prarial experiences, and, converting his halted waggon into a temporary cabin, he resolved to rest here and "settle."

There was little difficulty in so doing. The cultivated clearings he had passed were few and far between; the land would be his by discovery and occupation; his habits of loneliness and self-reliance made him independent of

neighbours. He took his first meal in his new solitude under a spreading willow, but so near his natural boundary that the waters gurgled and oozed in the reeds but a few feet from him. The sun sank, deepening the gold of the river until it might have been the stream of Pactolus itself. But Martin Morse had no imagination ; he was not even a gold-seeker ; he had simply obeyed the roving instincts of the frontier-man in coming hither. The land was virgin and unoccupied ; it was his ; he was alone. These questions settled, he smoked his pipe with less concern over his three thousand miles' transference of habitation than the man of cities who had moved into a next street. When the sun sank he rolled himself in his blankets in the waggon bed and went quietly to sleep.

But he was presently awakened by something which at first he could not determine to be a noise or an intangible sensation. It was a deep throbbing through the silence of the night—a pulsation that seemed even to be communicated to the rude bed whereon he lay. As it came nearer it separated itself into a laboured, monotonous panting, continuous, but distinct from an equally monotonous but fainter beating of the waters, as if the whole track of the river were being coursed and trodden by a multitude of swiftly trampling feet. A strange feeling took possession of him—half of fear, half of curious expectation. It was coming nearer. He rose, leaped hurriedly from the waggon, and ran to the bank. The night was dark ; at first he saw nothing before him but the steel-black sky pierced with far-spaced, irregularly scattered stars. Then there seemed to be approaching him, from the left, another and more symmetrical constellation—a few red and blue stars high above the river, with three compact lines of larger planetary lights flashing towards him and apparently on his own level. It was almost upon him ;

he involuntarily drew back as the strange phenomenon swept abreast of where he stood, and resolved itself into a dark yet airy bulk, whose vagueness, topped by enormous towers, was yet illuminated by those open squares of light that he had taken for stars, but which he saw now were brilliantly lit windows.

Their vivid rays shot through the reeds and sent broad bands across the meadow, the stationary waggon, and the slumbering oxen. But all this was nothing to the inner life they disclosed through lifted curtains and open blinds, which was the crowning revelation of this strange and wonderful spectacle. Elegantly dressed men and women moved through brilliantly lit and elaborately gilt saloons; in one a banquet seemed to be spread, served by white-jacketed servants; in another were men playing cards around marble-topped tables; in another the light flashed back again from the mirrors and glistening glasses and decanters of a gorgeous refreshment saloon; in smaller openings there was the shy disclosure of dainty white curtains and velvet lounges of more intimate apartments.

Martin Morse stood enthralled and mystified. It was as if some invisible Asmodeus had revealed to this simple frontier-man a world of which he had never dreamed. It was *the* world—a world of which he knew nothing in his simple, rustic habits and profound Western isolation—sweeping by him with the rush of an unknown planet. In another moment it was gone; a shower of sparks shot up from one of the towers and fell all around him, and then vanished, even as he remembered the set piece of “Fourth of July” fireworks had vanished in his own rural town when he was a boy. The darkness fell with it too. But such was his utter absorption and breathless preoccupation that only a cold chill recalled him to himself, and he found he was standing mid-leg deep in the surge cast over the

low banks by this passage of the first steamboat he had ever seen !

He waited for it the next night, when it appeared a little later from the opposite direction on its return trip. He watched it the next night and the next. Hereafter he never missed it, coming or going—whatever the hard and weary preoccupations of his new and lonely life. He felt he could not have slept without seeing it go by. Oddly enough, his interest and desire did not go further. Even had he the time and money to spend in a passage on the boat, and thus actively realise the great world of which he had only these rare glimpses, a certain proud, rustic shyness kept him from it. It was not *his* world ; he could not affront the snubs that his ignorance and inexperience would have provoked, and he was dimly conscious, as so many of us are in our ignorance, that in mingling with it he would simply lose the easy privileges of alien criticism. For there was much that he did not understand and some things that grated upon his lonely independence.

One night, a lighter one than those previous, he lingered a little longer in the moonlight to watch the phosphorescent wake of the retreating boat. Suddenly it struck him that there was a certain irregular splashing in the water, quite different from the regular, diagonally crossing surges that the boat swept upon the bank. Looking at it more intently, he saw a black object turning in the water like a porpoise, and then the unmistakable uplifting of a black arm in an unskilful swimmer's overhand stroke. It was a struggling man. But it was quickly evident that the current was too strong and the turbulence of the shallow water too great for his efforts. Without a moment's hesitation, clad as he was in only his shirt and trousers, Morse strode into the reeds, and the next moment, with a call of warning, was swimming towards the now wildly struggling

figure. But, from some unknown reason, as Morse approached him nearer the man uttered some incoherent protest and desperately turned away, throwing off Morse's extended arm.

Attributing this only to the vague convulsions of a drowning man, Morse, a skilled swimmer, managed to clutch his shoulder, and propelled him at arm's length, still struggling, apparently with as much reluctance as incapacity, towards the bank. As their feet touched the reeds and slimy bottom the man's resistance ceased, and he lapsed quite listlessly in Morse's arms. Half lifting, half dragging his burden, he succeeded at last in gaining the strip of meadow, and deposited the unconscious man beneath the willow tree. Then he ran to his waggon for whisky.

But, to his surprise, on his return the man was already sitting up and wringing the water from his clothes. He then saw for the first time, by the clear moonlight, that the stranger was elegantly dressed and of striking appearance, and was clearly a part of that bright and fascinating world which Morse had been contemplating in his solitude. He eagerly took the proffered tin cup and drank the whisky. Then he rose to his feet, staggered a few steps forward, and glanced curiously around him at the still, motionless waggon, the few felled trees and evidence of "clearing," and even at the rude cabin of logs and canvas just beginning to rise from the ground a few paces distant, and said impatiently—

"Where the devil am I?"

Morse hesitated. He was unable to name the locality of his dwelling-place. He answered briefly—

"On the right bank of the Sacramento."

The stranger turned upon him a look of suspicion not unmixed with resentment. "Oh!" he said, with ironical

gravity, "and I suppose that this water you picked me out of was the Sacramento River. Thank you!"

Morse, with slow Western patience, explained that he had only settled there three weeks ago, and the place had no name.

"What's your nearest town, then?"

"Thar ain't any. Thar's a blacksmith's shop and grocery at the cross-roads, twenty miles further on, but it's got no name as I've heard on."

The stranger's look of suspicion passed. "Well," he said in an imperative fashion, which, however, seemed as much the result of habit as the occasion, "I want a horse, and mighty quick, too."

"H'ain't got any."

"No horse? How did you get to this place?"

Morse pointed to the slumbering oxen.

The stranger again stared curiously at him. After a pause he said, with a half pitying, half humorous smile: "Pike—aren't you?"

Whether Morse did or did not know that this current Californian slang for a denizen of the bucolic West implied a certain contempt, he replied simply—

"I'm from Pike County, Missouri."

"Well," said the stranger, resuming his impatient manner, "you must beg or steal a horse from your neighbours."

"Thar ain't any neighbour nearer than fifteen miles."

"Then send fifteen miles! Stop." He opened his still clinging shirt and drew out a belt pouch, which he threw to Morse. "There! there's one hundred and fifty dollars in that. Now, I want a horse. *Sabe?*"

"Thar ain't any one to send," said Morse quietly.

"Do you mean to say you are all alone here?"

"Yes."

"And you fished me out—all by yourself?"

"Yes."

The stranger again examined him curiously. Then he suddenly stretched out his hand and grasped his companion's.

"All right; if you can't send, I reckon I can manage to walk over there to-morrow."

"I was goin' on to say," said Morse simply, "that if you'll lie by to-night, I'll start over sun up, after puttin' out the cattle, and fetch you back a horse afore noon."

"That's enough." He, however, remained looking curiously at Morse. "Did you never hear," he said, with a singular smile, "that it was about the meanest kind of luck that could happen to you to save a drowning man?"

"No," said Morse simply. "I reckon it orter be the meanest if you *didn't*."

"That depends upon the man you save," said the stranger, with the same ambiguous smile, "and whether the *saving* him is only putting things off. Look here," he added, with an abrupt return to his imperative style, "can't you give me some dry clothes?"

Morse brought him a pair of overalls and a "hickory shirt," well worn, but smelling strongly of a recent wash with coarse soap. The stranger put them on while his companion busied himself in collecting a pile of sticks and dry leaves.

"What's that for?" said the stranger suddenly.

"A fire to dry your clothes."

The stranger calmly kicked the pile aside.

"Not any fire to-night if I know it," he said brusquely. Before Morse could resent his quickly changing moods he continued, in another tone, dropping to an easy reclining position beneath the tree, "Now, tell me all about yourself, and what you are doing here."

Thus commanded, Morse patiently repeated his story

from the time he had left his backwoods cabin to his selection of the river bank for a "location." He pointed out the rich quality of this alluvial bottom and its adaptability for the raising of stock, which he hoped soon to acquire. The stranger smiled grimly, raised himself to a sitting position, and, taking a penknife from his damp clothes, began to clean his nails in the bright moonlight—an occupation which made the simple Morse wander vaguely in his narration.

"And you don't know that this hole will give you chills and fever till you'll shake yourself out of your boots?"

Morse had lived before in aguish districts, and had no fear.

"And you never heard that some night the whole river will rise up and walk over you and your cabin and your stock?"

"No. For I reckon to move my shanty farther back."

The man shut up his penknife with a click and rose.

"If you've got to get up at sunrise, we'd better be turning in. I suppose you can give me a pair of blankets?"

Morse pointed to the waggon. "Thar's a shakedown in the waggon bed; you kin lie there." Nevertheless he hesitated, and, with the inconsequence and abruptness of a shy man, continued the previous conversation.

"I shouldn't like to move far away, for them steamboats is pow'ful kempany o' nights. I never seed one afore I kem here," and then, with the inconsistency of a reserved man, and without a word of further preliminary, he launched into a confidential disclosure of his late experiences. The stranger listened with a singular interest and a quietly searching eye.

"Then you were watching the boat very closely just now when you saw me. What else did you see? Anything before that—before you saw me in the water?"

"No—the boat had got well off before I saw you at all."

"Ah," said the stranger. "Well, I'm going to turn in."

He walked to the waggon, mounted it, and by the time that Morse had reached it with his wet clothes he was already wrapped in the blankets. A moment later he seemed to be in a profound slumber.

It was only then, when his guest was lying helplessly at his mercy, that he began to realise his strange experiences. The domination of this man had been so complete that Morse, although by nature independent and self-reliant, had not permitted himself to question his right or to resent his rudeness. He had accepted his guest's careless or premeditated silence regarding the particulars of his accident as a matter of course, and had never dreamed of questioning him. That it was a natural accident of that great world so apart from his own experiences he did not doubt, and thought no more about it. The advent of the man himself was greater to him than the causes which brought him there. He was as yet quite unconscious of the complete fascination this mysterious stranger held over him, but he found himself shyly pleased with even the slight interest he had displayed in his affairs, and his hand felt yet warm and tingling from his sudden soft but expressive grasp, as if it had been a woman's. There is a simple intuition of friendship in some lonely, self-abstracted natures that is nearly akin to love at first sight. Even the audacities and insolence of this stranger affected Morse as he might have been touched and captivated by the coquettish or imperiousness of some bucolic virgin. And this reserved and shy frontier-man found himself that night sleepless, and hovering with an abashed timidity and consciousness around the waggon that sheltered his guest as if he had been a very Corydon watching the moonlit couch of some slumbering Amaryllis.

He was off by daylight—after having placed a rude breakfast by the side of the still sleeping guest—and before mid-day he had returned with a horse. When he handed the stranger his pouch, less the amount he had paid for the horse, the man said curtly—

“What’s that for?”

“Your change. I paid only fifty dollars for the horse.”

The stranger regarded him with his peculiar smile. Then, replacing the pouch in his belt, he shook Morse’s hand again and mounted the horse.

“So your name’s Martin Morse! Well—good-bye, Morsey!”

Morse hesitated. A blush rose to his dark cheek. “You didn’t tell me *your* name,” he said. “In case——”

“In case I’m *wanted*? Well, you can call me Captain Jack.” He smiled, and, nodding his head, put spurs to his mustang and cantered away.

Morse did not do much work that day, falling into abstracted moods and living over his experiences of the previous night, until he fancied he could almost see his strange guest again. The narrow strip of meadow was haunted by him. There was the tree under which he had first placed him, and that was where he had seen him sitting up in his dripping but well-fitting clothes. In the rough garments he had worn and returned lingered a new scent of some delicate soap, overpowering the strong alkali flavour of his own. He was early by the river-side, having a vague hope, he knew not why, that he should again see and recognise him among the passengers. He was wading out among the reeds, in the faint light of the rising moon, recalling the exact spot where he had first seen the stranger, when he was suddenly startled by the rolling over in the water of some black object that had caught against the bank, but had been dislodged by his move-

ments. To his horror it bore a faint resemblance to his first vision of the preceding night. But a second glance at the helplessly floating hair and bloated outline showed him that it was a *dead* man, and of a type and build far different from his former companion. There was a bruise upon his matted forehead and an enormous wound in his throat already washed bloodless, white, and waxen. An inexplicable fear came upon him, not at the sight of the corpse, for he had been in Indian massacres and had rescued bodies mutilated beyond recognition ; but from some moral dread that, strangely enough, quickened and deepened with the far-off pant of the advancing steamboat. Scarcely knowing why, he dragged the body hurriedly ashore, concealing it in the reeds, as if he were disposing of the evidence of his own crime. Then, to his preposterous terror, he noticed that the panting of the steamboat and the beat of its paddles were "slowing" as the vague bulk came in sight, until a huge wave from the suddenly arrested wheels sent a surge like an enormous heart-beat pulsating through the sedge that half submerged him. The flashing of three or four lanterns on deck and the motionless line of lights abreast of him dazzled his eyes, but he knew that the low fringe of willows hid his house and waggon completely from view. A vague murmur of voices from the deck was suddenly over-ridden by a sharp order, and to his relief the slowly revolving wheels again sent a pulsation through the water, and the great fabric moved solemnly away. A sense of relief came over him, he knew not why, and he was conscious that for the first time he had not cared to look at the boat.

When the moon arose he again examined the body, and took from its clothing a few articles of identification and some papers of formality and precision, which he vaguely conjectured to be some law papers from their

resemblance to the phrasing of sheriffs' and electors' notices which he had seen in the papers. He then buried the corpse in a shallow trench, which he dug by the light of the moon. He had no question of responsibility; his pioneer training had not included coroners' inquests in its experience; in giving the body a speedy and secure burial from predatory animals he did what one frontier-man would do for another—what he hoped might be done for *him*. If his previous unaccountable feelings returned occasionally, it was not from that; but rather from some uneasiness in regard to his late guest's possible feelings, and a regret that he had not been here at the finding of the body. That it would in some way have explained his own accident he did not doubt.

The boat did not "slow up" the next night, but passed as usual; yet three or four days elapsed before he could look forward to its coming with his old extravagant and half-exalted curiosity—which was his nearest approach to imagination. He was then able to examine it more closely for the appearance of the stranger whom he now began to call "his friend" in his verbal communings with himself, but whom he did not seem destined to again discover; until one day, to his astonishment, a couple of fine horses were brought to his clearing by a stock-drover. They had been "ordered" to be left there. In vain Morse expostulated and questioned.

"Your name's Martin Morse, ain't it?" said the drover, with business brusqueness; "and I reckon there ain't no other man o' that name around here?"

"No," said Morse.

"Well, then, they're *yours*."

"But who sent them?" insisted Morse. "What was his name, and where does he live?"

"I didn't know ez I was called upon to give the pedigree

o' buyers," said the drover drily; "but the horses is 'Morgan,' you can bet your life." He grinned as he rode away.

That Captain Jack sent them, and that it was a natural prelude to his again visiting him, Morse did not doubt, and for a few days he lived in that dream. But Captain Jack did not come. The animals were of great service to him in "rounding up" the stock he now easily took in for pasturage, and saved him the necessity of having a partner or a hired man. The idea that this superior gentleman in fine clothes might ever appear to him in the former capacity had even flitted through his brain, but he had rejected it with a sigh. But the thought that, with luck and industry, he himself might, in course of time, approximate to Captain Jack's evident station, *did* occur to him, and was an incentive to energy. Yet it was quite distinct from the ordinary working-man's ambition of wealth and state. It was only that it might make him more worthy of his friend. The great world was still as it had appeared to him in the passing boat—a thing to wonder at—to be above—and to criticise.

For all that, he prospered in his occupation. But one day he woke with listless limbs and feet that scarcely carried him through his daily labours. At night his listlessness changed to active pain and a feverishness that seemed to impel him towards the fateful river, as if his one aim in life was to drink up its waters and bathe in its yellow stream. But whenever he seemed to attempt it strange dreams assailed him of dead bodies arising with swollen and distorted lips to touch his own as he strove to drink, or of his mysterious guest battling with him in its current, and driving him ashore. Again, when he essayed to bathe his parched and crackling limbs in its flood, he would be confronted with the dazzling lights of the motionless steamboat and the glare of stony eyes—until he fled in

aimless terror. How long this lasted he knew not, until one morning he awoke in his new cabin with a strange man sitting by his bed and a negress in the doorway.

"You've had a sharp attack of 'tule fever,'" said the stranger, dropping Morse's listless wrist and answering his questioning eyes; "but you're all right now and will pull through."

"Who are you?" stammered Morse feebly.

"Dr. Duchesne, of Sacramento."

"How did you come here?"

"I was ordered to come to you and bring a nurse, as you were alone. There she is." He pointed to the smiling negress.

"Who ordered you?"

The doctor smiled with professional tolerance. "One of your friends, of course."

"But what was his name?"

"Really I don't remember. But don't distress yourself. He has settled for everything right royally. You have only to get strong now. My duty is ended, and I can safely leave you with the nurse. Only when you are strong again, I say—and *he* says—keep back farther from the river."

And that was all he knew. For even the nurse who attended him through the first days of his brief convalescence would tell him nothing more. He quickly got rid of her and resumed his work, for a new and strange phase of his simple, childish affection for his benefactor, partly superinduced by his illness, was affecting him. He was beginning to feel the pain of an unequal friendship; he was dimly conscious that his mysterious guest was only coldly returning his hospitality and benefits, while holding aloof from any association with him—and indicating the immeasurable distance that separated their future intercourse. He had withheld any kind message or sympathetic

greeting ; he had kept back even his *name*. The shy, proud, ignorant heart of the frontiersman swelled beneath the fancied slight, which left him helpless alike of reproach or resentment. He could not return the horses, although in a fit of childish indignation he had resolved not to use them ; he could not reimburse him for the doctor's bill, although he had sent away the nurse.

He took a foolish satisfaction in not moving back from the river, with a saint hope that his ignoring of Captain Jack's advice might mysteriously be conveyed to him. He even thought of selling out his location and abandoning it, that he might escape the cold surveillance of his heartless friend. All this was undoubtedly childish—but there is an irrepressible simplicity of youth in all deep feeling, and the worldly inexperience of the frontiersman left him as innocent as a child. In this phase of his unrequited affection he even went so far as to seek some news of Captain Jack at Sacramento, and, following out his foolish quest, to even take the steamboat from thence to Stockton.

What happened to him then was perhaps the common experience of such natures. Once upon the boat the illusion of the great world it contained for him utterly vanished. He found it noisy, formal, insincere, and—had he ever understood or used the word in his limited vocabulary—*vulgar*. Rather, perhaps, it seemed to him that the prevailing sentiment and action of those who frequented it—and for whom it was built—were of a lower grade than his own. And, strangely enough, this gave him none of his former sense of critical superiority, but only of his own utter and complete isolation. He wandered in his rough frontiersman's clothes from deck to cabin, from airy galleries to long saloons, alone, unchallenged, unrecognised, as if he were again haunting it only in spirit, as he had so often done in his dreams.

His presence on the fringe of some volatile crowd caused no interruption ; to him their speech was almost foreign in its allusions to things he did not understand, or, worse, seemed inconsistent with their eagerness and excitement. How different from all this was his old recollections of the slowly oncoming teams, uplifted above the level horizon of the plains in his former wanderings ; the few sauntering figures that met him as man to man, and exchanged the chronicle of the road ; the record of Indian tracks ; the finding of a spring ; the discovery of pasturage, with the lazy, restful hospitality of the night ! And how fierce here this continual struggle for dominance and existence, even in this lull of passage. For above all and through all he was conscious of the feverish haste of speed and exertion.

The boat trembled, vibrated, and shook with every stroke of the ponderous piston. The laughter of the crowd, the exchange of gossip and news, the banquet at the long table, the newspapers and books in the reading-room, even the luxurious couches in the state-rooms, were all dominated, thrilled, and pulsating with the perpetual throb of the demon of hurry and unrest. And when at last a horrible fascination dragged him into the engine-room, and he saw the cruel relentless machinery at work, he seemed to recognise and understand some intelligent but pitiless Moloch, who was dragging this feverish world at its heels.

Later he was seated in a corner of the hurricane deck, whence he could view the monotonous banks of the river ; yet, perhaps by certain signs unobservable to others, he knew he was approaching his own locality. He knew that his cabin and clearing would be indiscernible behind the fringe of willows on the bank, but he already distinguished the points where a few cottonwoods struggled into a promontory of lighter foliage beyond them. Here voices fell upon his ear, and he was suddenly aware that two men

had lazily crossed over from the other side of the boat, and were standing before him looking upon the bank.

"It was about here, I reckon," said one listlessly, as if continuing a previous lagging conversation, "that it must have happened. For it was after we were making for the bend we've just passed that the deputy, goin' to the state-room below us, found the door locked and the window open. But both men—Jack Despard and Seth Hall, the sheriff—weren't to be found. Not a trace of 'em. The boat was searched, but all for nothing. The idea is that the sheriff, arter getting his prisoner comf'ble in the state-room, took off Jack's handcuffs and locked the door; that Jack, who was mighty desp'rate, bolted through the window into the river, and the sheriff, who was no slouch, arter him. Others allow—for the chairs and things was all tossed about in the state-room—that the two men clinched *thar*, and Jack choked Hall and chucked him out, and then slipped cl'ar into the water himself, for the state-room window was just ahead of the paddle-box, and the cap'n allows that no man or men could fall afore the paddles and live. Anyhow, that was all they ever knew of it."

"And there wasn't no trace of them found?" said the second man, after a long pause.

"No. Cap'n says them paddles would hev' just snatched 'em and slung 'em round and round and buried 'em 'way down in the ooze of the river bed, with all the silt of the current atop of 'em, and they mightn't come up for ages; or else the wheels might have waltzed 'em 'way up to Sacramento until there wasn't enough left of 'em to float, and dropped 'em when the boat stopped."

"It was a mighty fool risk for a man like Despard to take," resumed the second speaker as he turned away with a slight yawn.

"Bet your life! but he was desp'rate, and the sheriff had

got him sure! And they *do* say that he was superstitious, like all them gamblers, and allowed that a man who was fixed to die by a rope or a pistol wasn't to be washed out of life by water."

The two figures drifted lazily away, but Morse sat rigid and motionless. Yet, strange to say, only one idea came to him clearly out of this awful revelation—the thought that his friend was still true to him—and that his strange absence and mysterious silence were fully accounted for and explained. And with it came the more thrilling fancy that this man was alive now to *him* alone.

He was the sole custodian of his secret. The morality of the question, while it profoundly disturbed him, was rather in reference to its effect upon the chances of Captain Jack and the power it gave his enemies than his own conscience. He would rather that his friend should have proven the prescribed outlaw who retained an unselfish interest in him than the superior gentleman who was coldly wiping out his gratitude. He thought he understood now the reason of his visitor's strange and varying moods—even his bitter superstitious warning in regard to the probable curse entailed upon one who should save a drowning man. Of this he recked little; enough that he fancied that Captain Jack's concern in his illness was heightened by that fear, and this assurance of his protecting friendship thrilled him with pleasure.

There was no reason now why he should not at once go back to his farm, where, at least, Captain Jack would always find him; and he did so, returning on the same boat. He was now fully recovered from his illness, and calmer in mind; he redoubled his labours to put himself in a position to help the mysterious fugitive when the time should come. The remote farm should always be a haven of refuge for him, and in this hope he forbore to take any

outside help, remaining solitary and alone that Captain Jack's retreat should be inviolate. And so the long, dry season passed, the hay was gathered, the pasturing herds sent home, and the first rains, dimpling like shot the broadening surface of the river, were all that broke his unending solitude. In this enforced attitude of waiting and expectancy he was exalted and strengthened by a new idea. He was not a religious man, but dimly remembering the exhortations of some camp meeting of his boyhood, he conceived the idea that he might have been selected to work out the regeneration of Captain Jack. What might not come of this meeting and communing together in this lonely spot? That anything was due to the memory of the murdered sheriff, whose bones were rotting in the trench that he daily but unconcernedly passed, did not occur to him. Perhaps his mind was not large enough for the double consideration. Friendship and love—and, for the matter of that, religion—are eminently one-ideaed.

But one night he awakened with a start. His hand, which was hanging out of his bunk, was dabbling idly in water. He had barely time to spring to his middle in what seemed to be a slowly filling tank before the door fell out as from that inward pressure, and his whole shanty collapsed like a pack of cards. But it fell outwards, the roof sliding from over his head like a withdrawn canopy; and he was swept from his feet against it, and thence out into what might have been another world! For the rain had ceased, and the full moon revealed only one vast, illimitable expanse of water! It was not an overflow, but the whole rushing river magnified and repeated a thousand times, which, even as he gasped for breath and clung to the roof, was bearing him away he knew not whither. But it was bearing him away upon its centre, for as he cast one swift glance towards his meadows he saw they

were covered by the same sweeping torrent, dotted with his sailing hay-ricks and reaching to the wooded foothills. It was the great flood of '54. In its awe-inspiring completeness it might have seemed to him the primeval Deluge.

As his frail raft swept under a cottonwood he caught at one of the overhanging limbs, and, working his way desperately along the bough, at last reached a secure position in the fork of the tree. Here he was for the moment safe. But the devastation viewed from this height was only the more appalling. Every sign of his clearing, all evidence of his past year's industry, had disappeared. He was now conscious for the first time of the lowing of the few cattle he had kept as, huddled together on a slight eminence, they one by one slipped over struggling into the flood. The shining bodies of his dead horses rolled by him as he gazed. The lower-lying limbs of the sycamore near him were bending with the burden of the lighter articles from his overturned waggon and cabin which they had caught and retained, and a rake was securely lodged in a bough. The habitual solitude of his locality was now strangely invaded by drifting sheds, agricultural implements and fence rails from unknown and remote neighbours, and he could faintly hear the far-off calling of some unhappy farmer adrift upon a spar of his wrecked and shattered house. When day broke he was cold and hungry.

Hours passed in hopeless monotony, with no slackening or diminution of the waters. Even the drifts became less, and a vacant sea at last spread before him on which nothing moved. An awful silence impressed him. In the afternoon rain again began to fall on this grey, nebulous expanse, until the whole world seemed made of aqueous vapour. He had but one idea now—the coming of the evening boat, and he would reserve his strength to swim to it. He did not know until later that it could no longer

follow the old channel of the river, and passed far beyond his sight and hearing. With his disappointment and exposure that night came a return of his old fever. His limbs were alternately racked with pain or benumbed and lifeless. He could scarcely retain his position—at times he scarcely cared to—and speculated upon ending his sufferings by a quick plunge downwards. In other moments of lucid misery he was conscious of having wandered in his mind ; of having seen the dead face of the murdered sheriff, washed out of his shallow grave by the flood, staring at him from the water ; to this was added the hallucination of noises. He heard voices, his own name called by a voice he knew—Captain Jack's !

Suddenly he started, but in that fatal movement lost his balance and plunged downwards. But before the water closed above his head he had had a cruel glimpse of help near him ; of a flashing light—of the black hull of a tug not many yards away—of moving figures—the sensation of a sudden plunge following his own, the grip of a strong hand upon his collar, and—unconsciousness !

When he came to he was being lifted in a boat from the tug and rowed through the deserted streets of a large city, until he was taken in through the second-storey window of a half-submerged hotel and cared for. But all his questions yielded only the information that the tug—a privately procured one, not belonging to the Public Relief Association—had been despatched for him with special directions by a man who acted as one of the crew, and who was the one who had plunged in for him at the last moment. The man had left the boat at Stockton. There was nothing more? Yes!—he had left a letter. Morse seized it feverishly. It contained only a few lines:—

"We are quits now. You are all right. I have saved you from drowning, and shifted the curse to my own shoulders. Good-bye. CAPTAIN JACK."

The astounded man attempted to rise—to utter an exclamation—but fell back unconscious.

Weeks passed before he was able to leave his bed—and then only as an impoverished and physically shattered man. He had no means to restock the farm left bare by the subsiding water. A kindly train-packer offered him a situation as muleteer in a pack-train going to the mountains—for he knew tracks and passes and could ride. The mountains gave him back a little of the vigour he had lost in the river valley, but none of its dreams and ambitions. One day, while tracking a lost mule, he stopped to slake his thirst in a water-hole—all that the summer had left of a lonely mountain torrent. Enlarging the hole to give drink to his beast also, he was obliged to dislodge and throw out with the red soil some bits of honeycomb rock, which were so queer-looking and so heavy as to attract his attention. Two of the largest he took back to camp with him. They were gold. From the locality he took out a fortune. Nobody wondered. To the Californian's superstition it was perfectly natural. It was "nigger luck"—the luck of the stupid, the ignorant, the inexperienced, the non-seeker—the irony of the gods!

But the simple bucolic nature, that had sustained itself against temptation with patient industry and lonely self-concentration, succumbed to rapidly acquired wealth. So it chanced that one day, with a crowd of excitement-loving spendthrifts and companions, he found himself on the outskirts of a lawless mountain town. An eager frantic crowd had already assembled there—a desperado was to be lynched! Pushing his way through the crowd for a nearer view of the exciting spectacle, the changed and reckless Morse was stopped by armed men only at the foot of a cart, which upheld a quiet, determined man, who, with a rope around his neck, was scornfully surveying the mob,

that held the other end of the rope drawn across the limb of a tree above him. The eyes of the doomed man caught those of Morse—his expression changed—a kindly smile lit his face—he bowed his proud head for the first time, with an easy gesture of farewell.

And then, with a cry, Morse threw himself upon the nearest armed guard, and a fierce struggle began. He had overpowered one adversary and seized another in his hopeless fight towards the cart when the half-astonished crowd felt that something must be done. It was done with a sharp report, the upward curl of smoke and the falling back of the guard as Morse staggered forward *free*—with a bullet in his heart. Yet even then he did not fall until he reached the cart, when he lapsed forward, dead, with his arms outstretched and his head at the doomed man's feet.

There was something so supreme and all-powerful in this hopeless act of devotion that the heart of the multitude thrilled and then recoiled aghast at its work, and a single word or a gesture from the doomed man himself would have set him free. But they say—and it is credibly recorded—that as Captain Jack Despard looked down upon the hopeless sacrifice at his feet his eyes blazed, and he flung upon the crowd a curse so awful and sweeping that, hardened as they were, their blood ran cold, and then leaped furiously to their cheeks.

"And now," he said, coolly tightening the rope around his neck with a jerk of his head—"Go on, and be d——d to you! I'm ready."

They did not hesitate this time. And Martin Morse and Captain Jack Despard were buried in the same grave.

A Convert of the Mission.

THE largest tent of the Tasajara Camp meeting was crowded to its utmost extent. The excitement of that dense mass was at its highest pitch. The Reverend Stephen Masterton, the single erect, passionate figure of that confused medley of kneeling worshippers, had reached the culminating pitch of his irresistible exhortatory power. Sighs and groans were beginning to respond to his appeals when the reverend brother was seen to lurch heavily forward and fall to the ground.

At first the effect was that of a part of his performance ; the groans redoubled, and twenty or thirty brethren threw themselves prostrate in humble imitation of the preacher. But Sister Deborah Stokes, perhaps through some special revelation of feminine intuition, grasped the fallen man, tore loose his black silk necktie, and dragged him free of the struggling, frantic crowd whose paroxysms he had just evoked. Howbeit he was pale and unconscious, and unable to continue the service. Even the next day, when he had slightly recovered, it was found that any attempt to renew his fervid exhortations produced the same disastrous result.

A council was hurriedly held by the elders. In spite of the energetic protests of Sister Stokes, it was held that the Lord "was wrestlin' with his sperrit," and he was subjected to the same extraordinary treatment from the whole congregation that he himself had applied to *them*. Propped

up pale and trembling in the "Mourners' Bench" by two Brethren, he was "striven with," exhorted, prayed over, and admonished, until insensibility mercifully succeeded convulsions. Spiritual therapeutics having failed, he was turned over to the weak and carnal nursing of "women folk." But after a month of incapacity he was obliged to yield to "the flesh," and, in the local dialect, "to use a doctor."

It so chanced that the medical practitioner of the district was a man of large experience, of military training, and plain speech. When, therefore, he one day found in his surgery a man of rude Western type, strong limbed and sunburned, but trembling, hesitating and neurotic in movement, after listening to his symptoms gravely, he asked abruptly: "And how much are you drinking now?"

"I am a life-long abstainer," stammered his patient in quivering indignation. But this was followed by another question so frankly appalling to the hearer that he staggered to his feet.

"I'm Stephen Masterton—known of men as a Circuit Preacher, of the Northern California district," he thundered—"and an enemy of the flesh in all its forms."

"I beg your pardon," responded Dr. Duchesne grimly, "but as you are suffering from excessive and repeated excitation of the nervous system, and the depression following prolonged artificial exaltation—it makes little difference whether the cause be spiritual, as long as there is a certain physical effect upon your *body*, which I believe you have brought to me to cure. Now—as to diet? you look all wrong there."

"My food is of the simplest—I have no hankering for flesh-pots," responded the patient.

"I suppose you call Saleratus bread and salt pork and flap-jacks *simple?*" said the doctor coolly; "they are

common enough, and if you were working with your muscles instead of your nerves in that frame of yours they might not hurt you ; but you are suffering as much from eating more than you can digest as the veriest gourmand. You must stop all that. Go down to a quiet watering-place for two months. . . .”

“I go to a watering-place ?” interrupted Masterton ; “to the haunt of the idle, the frivolous and wanton—never !”

“Well, I’m not particular about a ‘watering-place,’ ” said the doctor, with a shrug, “although a little idleness and frivolity with different food wouldn’t hurt you—but you must go somewhere and change your habits and mode of life *completely*. I will find you some sleepy old Spanish town in the Southern county where you can rest and diet. If this is distasteful to you,” he continued grimly, “you can always call it ‘a trial.’ ”

Stephen Masterton may have thought it so when, a week later, he found himself issuing from a rocky gorge into a rough, badly paved, hilly street, which seemed to be only a continuation of the mountain road itself. It broadened suddenly into a square or *plaza*, flanked on each side by an irregular row of yellowing *adobe* houses, with the inevitable verandahed *tienda* in each corner, and the solitary, galleried *fonda*, with a half Moorish archway leading into an inner *patio* or courtyard in the centre.

The whole street stopped as usual at the very door of the Mission Church, a few hundred yards further on, and under the shadow of the two belfry towers at each angle of the façade, as if this were the *ultima thule* of every traveller. But all that the eye rested on was ruined, worn, and crumbling. The *adobe* houses were cracked by the incessant sunshine of the half-year long summer, or the more intermittent earthquake shock ; the paved courtyard of the *fonda* was so uneven and sunken in the centre that

the lumbering waggon and faded *diligencia* stood on an incline, and the mules with difficulty kept their footing while being unladen ; the whitened plaster had fallen from the feet of the two pillars that flanked the Mission doorway, like bandages from a gouty limb, leaving the reddish core of *adobe* visible ; there were apparently as many broken tiles in the streets and alleys as there were on the heavy red roofs that everywhere asserted themselves—and even seemed to slide down the crumbling walls to the ground. There were hopeless gaps in *grille* and grating of doorways and windows, where the iron bars had dropped helplessly out, or were bent at different angles. The walls of the peaceful Mission garden and the warlike *Presidio* were alike lost in the escalading vines or levelled by the pushing boughs of gnarled pear and olive trees that now surmounted them. The dust lay thick and impalpable in hollow and gutter, and rose in little vapoury clouds with a soft detonation at every stroke of his horse's hoofs. Over all this dust and ruin idleness seemed to reign supreme. From the velvet-jacketed figures lounging motionless in the shadows of the open doorways—so motionless that only the lazy drift of cigarette smoke betokened their breathing—to the reclining *peons* in the shade of a catalpa, or the squatting Indians in the *arroyo*—all was sloth and dirt.

The Rev. Stephen Masterton felt his throat swell with his old exhortative indignation. A gaudy yellow fan waved languidly in front of a black rose-crested head at a white-curtained window. He knew he was stifling with righteous wrath, and clapped his spurs to his horse.

Nevertheless in a few days, by the aid of a letter to the innkeeper, he was installed in a dilapidated *adobe* house, not unlike those he had seen, but situated in the outskirts, and overlooking the garden and part of the refectory of the old Mission. It had even a small garden of its own—if a

strip of hot wall, overburdened with yellow and white roses, a dozen straggling callas, a bank of heliotrope, and an almond tree could be called a garden. It had an open doorway, but so heavily recessed in the thick walls that it preserved seclusion, a sitting-room, and an alcoved bedroom with deep embrasured windows, that, however, excluded the unwinking sunlight and kept an even monotone of shade.

Strange to say, he found it cool, restful, and, in spite of the dust, absolutely clean, and, but for the scent of heliotrope, entirely inodorous. The dry air seemed to dissipate all noxious emanations and decay—the very dust itself in its fine impalpability was volatile with a spice-like piquancy, and left no stain.

A wrinkled Indian woman, brown and veined like a tobacco leaf, ministered to his simple wants. But these wants had also been regulated by Dr. Duchesne. He found himself, with some grave doubts of his effeminacy, breakfasting on a single cup of chocolate instead of his usual bowl of molasses-sweetened coffee; crumpling a crisp *tortilla* instead of the heavy Saleratus bread, greasy flapjack, or the lard-fried steak, and, more wonderful still, completing his repast with purple grapes from the Mission wall. He could not deny that it was simple—that it was even refreshing and consistent with the climate and his surroundings. On the other hand, it was the frugal diet of the commonest peasant—and were not those *peons* slothful idolaters?

At the end of the week—his correspondence being also restricted by his doctor to a few lines to himself regarding his progress—he wrote to that adviser:—

“The trembling and unquiet have almost ceased; I have less nightly turmoil and visions; my carnal appetite seems to be amply mollified and soothed by these viands,

whatever may be their ultimate effect upon the weakness of our common sinful nature. But I should not be truthful to you if I did not warn you that I am viewing with the deepest spiritual concern a decided tendency towards sloth, and a folding of the hands over matters that often, I fear, are spiritual as well as temporal. I would ask you to consider, in a spirit of love, if it be not wise to rouse my apathetic flesh, so as to strive, even with the feeblest exhortations—against this sloth in others—if only to keep oneself from falling into the pit of easy indulgence."

What answer he received is not known, but it is to be presumed that he kept loyal faith with his physician, and gave himself up to simple walks and rides and occasional meditation. His solitude was not broken upon ; curiosity was too active a vice, and induced too much exertion for his indolent neighbours, and the *Americano*'s basking seclusion, though unlike the habits of his countrymen, did not affect them. The shopkeeper and innkeeper saluted him always with a profound courtesy which awakened his slight resentment, partly because he was conscious that it was grateful to him, and partly that he felt he ought to have provoked in them a less satisfied condition.

Once, when he had unwittingly passed the confines of his own garden, through a gap in the Mission orchard, a lissome, black-coated shadow slipped past him with an obeisance so profound and gentle that he was startled at first into an awkward imitation of it himself, and then into an angry self-examination. He knew that he loathed that long-skirted, woman-like garment, that dangling, ostentatious symbol, that air of secrecy and mystery, and he inflated his chest above his loosely tied cravat and unbuttoned waistcoat with a contrasted sense of freedom. But he was conscious the next day of weakly avoiding a recurrence of this meeting, and in his self-examination put

it down to his self-disciplined observance of his doctor's orders. But when he was strong again, and fitted for his Master's work, how strenuously he should improve the occasion this gave him of attacking the Scarlet Woman among her slaves and worshippers!

His afternoon meditations and the perusal of his only book—the Bible—were regularly broken in upon at about sunset by two or three strokes from the cracked bell that hung in the open belfry which reared itself beyond the gnarled pear-trees. He could not say that it was aggressive or persistent, like his own church bells, nor that it even expressed to him any religious sentiment. Moreover, it was not a “Sabbath” bell, but a *daily* one, and even then seemed to be only a signal to ears easily responsive, rather than a stern reminder. And the hour was always a singularly witching one.

It was when the sun had slipped from the glaring red roofs, and the yellowing *adobe* of the Mission walls and the tall ranks of wild oats on the hillside were all of the one colour of old gold. It was when the quivering heat of the *arroyo* and dusty expanse of *plaza* were blending with the soft breath of the sea fog that crept through the clefts of the coast range, until a refreshing balm seemed to fall like a benediction on all nature. It was when the trade-wind-swept and irritated surfaces of the rocky gorge beyond were soothed with clinging vapours; when the pines above no longer rocked monotonously, and the great undulating sea of the wild oat plains had gone down and was at rest. It was at this hour, one afternoon, that, with the released scents of the garden, there came to him a strange and subtle perfume that was new to his senses. He laid aside his book, went into the garden, and, half unconscious of his trespass, passed through the Mission orchard and thence into the little churchyard beside the church.

Looking at the strange inscriptions in an unfamiliar tongue, he was singularly touched with the few cheap memorials lying upon the graves—like childish toys—and for the moment overlooked the papistic emblems that accompanied them. It struck him vaguely that Death, the common leveller, had made even the symbols of a faith eternal, inferior to those simple records of undying memory and affection, and he was for a moment startled into doubt.

He walked to the door of the church : to his surprise it was open. Standing upon the threshold he glanced inside, and stood for a moment utterly bewildered. In a man of refined taste and education that bizarre and highly coloured interior would have only provoked a smile or shrug ; to Stephen Masterton's highly emotional nature, but artistic inexperience, strangely enough it was profoundly impressive. The heavily timbered, roughly hewn roof, barred with alternate bands of blue and Indian red, the crimson hangings, the gold and black draperies, affected this religious backwoodsman exactly as they were designed to affect the heathen and acolytes for whose conversion the temple had been reared. He could scarcely take his eyes from the tinsel-crowned Mother of Heaven, resplendent in white and gold and glittering with jewels ; the radiant shield before the Host, illuminated by tall spectral candles in the mysterious obscurity of the altar, dazzled him like the rayed disc of the setting sun.

A gentle murmur, as of the distant sea, came from the altar. In his naïve bewilderment he had not seen the few kneeling figures in the shadow of column and aisle ; it was not until a man, whom he recognised as a muleteer he had seen that afternoon gambling and drinking in the *fonda*, slipped by him like a shadow and sank upon his knees in the centre of the aisle that he realised the overpowering truth.

He, Stephen Masterton, was looking upon some of rite Popish idolatry! He was turning quickly away when the keeper of the *tienda*—a man of sloth and sin—gently approached him from the shadow of a column with a mute gesture, which he took to be one of invitation. A fierce protest of scorn and indignation swelled to his throat, but died upon his lips. Yet he had strength enough to erect his gaunt, emaciated figure, throwing out his long arms and extended palms in the attitude of defiant exorcism, and then rush swiftly from the church. As he did so he thought he saw a faint smile cross the shopkeeper's face, and a whispered exchange of words with a neighbouring worshipper of more exalted appearance came to his ears. But it was not intelligible to his comprehension.

The next day he wrote to his doctor in that quaint grandiloquence of written speech with which the half-educated man balances the slips of his colloquial phrasing:—

“Do not let the purgation of my flesh be unduly protracted. What with the sloth and idolatries of Baal and Ashtaroth, which I see daily around me, I feel that without a protest not only the flesh but the spirit is mortified. But my bodily strength is mercifully returning, and I found myself yesterday able to take a long ride at that hour which they here keep sacred for an idolatrous rite, under the beautiful name of ‘The Angelus.’ Thus do they bear false witness to Him! Can you tell me the meaning of the Spanish words, ‘Don Keyhotter’? I am ignorant of these sensuous Southern languages, and am aware that this is not the correct spelling, but I have striven to give the phonetic equivalent. It was used, I am inclined to think, in reference to *myself*, by an idolater.

“P.S.—You need not trouble yourself. I have just ascertained that the words in question were simply the

title of an idle novel, and, of course, could not possibly refer to me."

Howbeit it was as "Don Quixote"—i.e. the common Spaniard's conception of the Knight of La Mancha, merely the simple fanatic and madman—that Mr. Stephen Master-ton ever after rode all unconsciously through the streets of the Mission, amid the half-pitying, half-smiling glances of the people.

In spite of his meditations, his single volume, and his habit of retiring early, he found his evenings were growing lonely and tedious. He missed the prayer-meeting, and, above all, the hymns. He had a fine baritone voice, sympathetic, as may be imagined, but not cultivated. One night, in the seclusion of his garden, and secure in his distance from other dwellings, he raised his voice in a familiar camp-meeting hymn with a strong Covenanter's ring in the chorus. Growing bolder as he went on, he at last filled the quiet night with the strenuous sweep of his chant. Surprised at his own fervour, he paused for a moment, listening, half frightened, half ashamed of his outbreak. But there was only the trilling of the night wind in the leaves, or the far-off yelp of a *coyote*.

For a moment he thought he heard the metallic twang of a stringed instrument in the Mission garden beyond his own, and remembered his contiguity to the Church with a stir of defiance. But he was relieved, nevertheless. His pent-up emotion had found vent, and without the nervous excitement that had followed his old exaltation. That night he slept better. He had found the Lord again—with Psalmody!

The next evening he chanced upon a softer hymn of the same simplicity, but with a vein of human tenderness in its aspirations, which his more hopeful mood gently rendered. At the conclusion of the first verse he was, however, dis-

tinctly conscious of being followed by the same twanging sound he had heard on the previous night, and which even his untutored ear could recognise as an attempt to accompany him. But before he had finished the second verse the unknown player, after an ingenious but ineffectual essay to grasp the right chord, abandoned it with an impatient and almost pettish flourish, and a loud bang upon the sounding-board of the unseen instrument. Masterton finished it alone.

With his curiosity excited, however, he tried to discover the locality of the hidden player. The sound evidently came from the Mission garden ; but in his ignorance of the language he could not even interrogate his Indian house-keeper. On the third night, however, his hymn was uninterrupted by any sound from the former musician. A sense of disappointment, he knew not why, came over him. The kindly overture of the unseen player had been a relief to his loneliness. Yet he had barely concluded the hymn when the familiar sound again struck his ears. But this time the musician played boldly, confidently, and with a singular skill on the instrument.

The brilliant prelude over, to his entire surprise and some confusion, a soprano voice, high, childish, but infinitely quaint and fascinating, was mischievously uplifted. But alas ! even to his ears, ignorant of the language, it was very clearly a song of levity and wantonness, of freedom and licence, of coquetry and incitement ! Yet such was its fascination that he fancied it was reclaimed by the delightfully childlike and innocent expression of the singer.

Enough that this tall, gaunt, broad-shouldered man arose, and, overcome by a curiosity almost as childlike, slipped into the garden and glided with an Indian softness of tread towards the voice. The moon shone full upon the ruined

Mission wall tipped with clusters of dark foliage. Half hiding, half mingling with one of them—an indistinct bulk of light-coloured huddled fleeces like an extravagant bird's nest—hung the unknown musician. So intent was the performer's preoccupation that Masterton actually reached the base of the wall immediately below the figure without attracting its attention. But his foot slipped on the crumbling *débris* with a snapping of dry twigs. There was a quick little cry from above. He had barely time to recover his position before the singer, impulsively leaning over the parapet, had lost hers, and fell outwards. But Masterton was tall, alert, and self-possessed, and threw out his long arms. The next moment they were full of soft flounces, a struggling figure was against his breast, and a woman's frightened little hands around his neck. But he had broken her fall, and almost instantly, yet with infinite gentleness, he released her unharmed, with hardly her crisp flounces crumpled, in an upright position against the wall. Even her guitar, still hanging from her shoulder by a yellow ribbon, had bounded elastic and resounding against the wall, but lay intact at her satin-slipped feet. She caught it up with another quick little cry, but this time more of sauciness than fear, and drew her little hand across its strings, half defiantly.

"I hope you are not hurt?" said the Circuit Preacher gravely.

She broke into a laugh so silvery that he thought it no extravagance to liken it to the moonbeams that played over her made audible. She was lithe, yet plump; barred with black and yellow and small waisted like a pretty wasp. Her complexion in that light was a sheen of pearl satin that made her eyes blacker and her little mouth redder than any other colour could. She was small, but, remembering the fourteen-year-old wife of the shopkeeper, he felt

that, for all her childish voice and features, she was a grown woman, and a sudden shyness took hold of him.

But she looked pertly in his face, stood her guitar upright before her, and put her hands behind her back as she leaned saucily against the wall and shrugged her shoulders.

"It was the fault of you," she said, in a broken English that seemed as much infantine as foreign. "What for you not remain to yourself in your own *casa*? So it come. You creep so—in the dark—and shake my wall, and I fall. And she," pointing to the guitar, "is a'most broke! And for all thees, I have only make to you a serenade. Ingrate!"

"I beg your pardon," said Masterton quickly, "but I was curious. I thought I might help you, and——"

"Make yourself another cat on the wall, eh? No; one is enough, thank you!"

A frown lowered on Masterton's brow. "You don't understand me," he said bluntly. "I did not know *who* was here."

"Ah, *bueno!* Then it is Pepita Ramirez, you see," she said, tapping her bodice with one little finger, "all the same; the niece from Manuel Garcia, who keeps the Mission garden and lif there. And you?"

"My name is Masterton."

"How mooch?"

"Masterton," he repeated.

She tried to pronounce it once or twice desperately, and then shook her little head so violently that a yellow rose fastened over her ear fell to the ground. But she did not heed it, nor the fact that Masterton had picked it up.

"Ah, I cannot!" she said poutingly. "It is as deefecult to make go as my guitar with your serenade."

"Can you not say 'Stephen Masterton'?" he asked more gently, with a returning and forgiving sense of her childishness.

"Es-stefen? Ah, *Esteban!* Yes; Don Esteban! *Bueno!*

Then, Don Esteban, what for you sink so melank-olly one night, and one night so fierce? The melank-olly, he ees not so bad; but the fierce—ah! he is weeked! Ess it how the *Americano* make always his serenade?"

Masterton's brow again darkened. And his hymn of exaltation had been mistaken by these people—by this—this wanton child!

"It was no serenade," he replied curtly; "it was in praise of the Lord!"

"Of how mooch?"

"Of the Lord of Hosts—of the Almighty in heaven." He lifted his long arms reverently on high.

"Oh!" she said, with a frightened look, slightly edging away from the wall. At a secure distance she stopped. "Then you are a soldier, Don Esteban?"

"No!"

"Then what for you sink 'I am a soldier of the Lord,' and you will make die 'in His army?' Oh yes; you have said." She gathered up her guitar tightly under her arm, shook her small finger at him gravely, and said, "You are a hoombog, Don Esteban; good a' night," and began to glide away.

"One moment, Miss—Miss Ramirez," called Masterton. "I—that is you—you have—forgotten your rose," he added feebly, holding up the flower. She halted.

"Ah, yes; he have drop, you have pick him up, he is yours. *I* have drop, you have pick *me* up, but I am *not* yours. Good a' night, *Comandante* Don Esteban!"

With a light laugh she ran along beside the wall for a little distance, suddenly leaped up and disappeared in one of the largest gaps in its ruined and helpless structure. Stephen Masterton gazed after her stupidly, still holding the rose in his hand. Then he threw it away and re-entered his home.

Lighting his candle he undressed himself, prayed fervently—so fervently that all remembrance of the idle, foolish incident was wiped from his mind—and went to bed. He slept well and dreamlessly.

The next morning, when his thoughts recurred to the previous night, this seemed to him a token that he had not deviated from his spiritual integrity; it did not occur to him that the thought itself was a tacit suspicion.

So his feet quite easily sought the garden again in the early sunshine, even to the wall where she had stood. But he had not taken into account the vivifying freshness of the morning, the renewed promise of life and resurrection in the pulsing air and potent sunlight, and as he stood there he seemed to see the figure of the young girl again leaning against the wall in all the charm of her irrepressible and innocent youth. More than that, he found the whole scene re-enacting itself before him; the nebulous drapery half hidden in the foliage, the cry and the fall; the momentary soft contact of the girl's figure against his own, the clinging arms around his neck, the brush and fragrance of her flounces—all this came back to him with a strength he had *not* felt when it occurred.

He was turning hurriedly away when his eyes fell upon the yellow rose still lying in the *débris* where he had thrown it—but still pure, fresh, and unfaded. He picked it up again, with a singular fancy that it was the girl herself, and carried it into the house.

As he placed it half shyly in a glass on his table a wonderful thought occurred to him. Was not the episode of last night a special providence? Was not that young girl, wayward and childlike, a mere neophyte in her idolatrous religion, as yet unsteeped in sloth and ignorance, presented to him as a brand to be snatched from the burning? Was not this the opportunity of conversion he

had longed for; this the chance of exercising his gifts of exhortation, that he had been hiding in the napkin of solitude and seclusion? Nay, was not all this *predestined*? His illness, his consequent exile to this land of false gods—this contiguity to the Mission—was not all this part of a supremely ordered plan for the girl's salvation—and was *he* not elected and ordained for that service? Nay, more, was not the girl herself a mere unconscious instrument in the hands of a higher power; was not her voluntary attempt to accompany him in his devotional exercise a vague stirring of that predestined force within her? Was not even that wantonness and frivolity contrasted with her childishness—which he had at first misunderstood—the stirrings of the flesh and the spirit, and was *he* to abandon her in that struggle of good and evil?

He lifted his bowed head, that had been resting on his arm before the little flower on the table—as if it were a shrine—with a flash of resolve in his blue eyes. The wrinkled Concepcion coming to her duties in the morning scarcely recognised her gloomily abstracted master in this transfigured man. He looked ten years younger.

She met his greeting, and the few direct inquiries that his new resolve enabled him to make more freely, with some information—which a later talk with the shop-keeper, who had a fuller English vocabulary, confirmed in detail.

“Yes! truly this was a niece of the Mission gardener, who lived with her uncle in the ruined wing of the old Presidio. She had taken her first communion four years ago. Ah, yes, she was a great musician, and could play on the organ. And the guitar, ah, yes—of a certainty. She was gay, and flirted with the Caballeros, young and old, but she cared not for any.”

Whatever satisfaction this latter statement gave Masterton,

he believed it was because the absence of any disturbing worldly affection would make her an easier convert.

But how continue this chance acquaintance and effect her conversion? For the first time Masterton realised the value of expediency; while his whole nature impelled him to frankly and publicly seek her society and openly exhort her, he knew that this was impossible; still more, he remembered her unmistakable fright at his first expression of faith; he must "be wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove." He must work upon her soul alone, and secretly. He, who would have shrunk from any clandestine association with a girl from mere human affection, saw no wrong in a covert intimacy for the purpose of religious salvation. Ignorant as he was of the ways of the world, and inexperienced in the usages of society, he began to plan methods of secretly meeting her with all the intrigue of a gallant. The perspicacity as well as the intuition of a true lover had descended upon him in this effort of mere spiritual conquest.

Armed with his information and a few Spanish words, he took the yellow Concepcion aside and gravely suborned her to carry a note to be delivered secretly to Miss Ramirez. To his great relief and some surprise the old woman grinned with intelligence, and her withered hand closed with a certain familiar dexterity over the epistle and the accompanying gratuity. To a man less naively one-ideaed it might have awakened some suspicion; but to the more sanguine hopefulness of Masterton it only suggested the fancy that Concepcion herself might prove to be open to conversion, and that he should in due season attempt *her* salvation also. But that would be later. For Concepcion was always with him and accessible; the girl was not.

The note, which had cost him some labour of composition, simple and almost business-like as was the result, ran as follows:—

"I wish to see you upon some matter of grave concern to yourself. Will you oblige me by coming again to the wall of the Mission to-night at early candle-light? It would avert worldly suspicion if you brought also your guitar."

The afternoon dragged slowly on; Concepcion returned; she had, with great difficulty, managed to see the Senorita, but not alone; she had, however, slipped the note into her hand, not daring to wait for an answer.

In his first hopefulness Masterton did not doubt what the answer would be, but as evening approached he grew concerned as to the girl's opportunities of coming, and regretted that he had not given her a choice of time.

Before his evening meal was finished he began to fear for her willingness, and doubt the potency of his note. He was accustomed to exhort *orally*—perhaps he ought to have waited for the chance of *speaking* to her directly without writing.

When the moon rose he was already in the garden. Lingering at first in the shadow of an olive tree, he waited until the moonbeams fell on the wall and its crests of foliage. But nothing moved among that ebony tracery; his ear was strained for the familiar tinkle of the guitar—all was silent. As the moon rose higher he at last boldly walked to the wall, and listened for any movement on the other side of it. But nothing stirred. She was evidently *not* coming—his note had failed.

He was turning away sadly, but as he faced his home again he heard a light laugh beside him. He stopped. A black shadow stepped out from beneath his own almond tree. He started, when, with a gesture that seemed familiar to him, the upper part of the shadow seemed to fall away with a long black mantilla, and the face of the young girl was revealed.

He could see now that she was clad in black lace from

head to foot. She looked taller, older, and he fancied even prettier than before. A sudden doubt of his ability to impress her, a swift realisation of all the difficulties of the attempt, and, for the first time, perhaps, a dim perception of the incongruity of the situation came over him.

"I was looking for you on the wall," he stammered.

"*Madre de Dios!*" she retorted, with a laugh and her old audacity, "you would that I shall *always* hang there, and drop upon you like a pear when you shake the tree? No!"

"You haven't brought your guitar," he continued, still more awkwardly, as he noticed that she held only a long black fan in her hand.

"For why? You would that I *play* it, and when my uncle say, 'Where go Pepita? She is loss,' some one shall say, 'Oh! I have hear her tink-a-tink in the garden of the *Americano*, who lif alone.' And then—it ess finish!"

Masterton began to feel exceedingly uncomfortable. There was something in this situation that he had not dreamed of. But with the persistency of an awkward man he went on.

"But you played on the wall the other night, and tried to accompany me."

"But that was last night and on the wall. I had not speak to you, you had not speak to me. You had not sent me the leetle note by your *peon*." She stopped, and suddenly opening her fan before her face, so that only her mischievous eyes were visible, added: "You had not asked me then to come to hear you make lof to me, Don Esteban. *That* is the difference."

The Circuit Preacher felt the blood rush to his face. Anger, shame, mortification, remorse, and fear alternately strove with him, but above all and through all he was conscious of a sharp, exquisite pleasure—that frightened him still more. Yet he managed to exclaim—

"No! no! You cannot think me capable of such a cowardly trick?"

The girl started, more at the unmistakable sincerity of his utterance than at the words, whose full meaning she may have only imperfectly caught.

"A treek? A treek?" she slowly and wonderingly repeated. Then suddenly, as if comprehending him, she turned her round black eyes full upon him and dropped her fan from her face.

"And *what* for you ask me to come here then?"

"I wanted to talk with you," he began, "on far more serious matters. I wished to—" but he stopped. He could not address this quaint child-woman, staring at him in black-eyed wonder, in either the measured or the impetuous terms with which he would have exhorted a maturer responsible being. He made a step towards her; she drew back, striking at his extended hand half impatiently, half mischievously with her fan.

He flushed—and then burst out bluntly, "I want to talk with you about your soul."

"My what?"

"Your immortal soul, unhappy girl."

"What have *you* to make with that? Are you a devil?" Her eyes grew rounder, though she faced him boldly.

"I am a Minister of the Gospel," he said, in hurried entreaty. "You must hear me for a moment. I would save your soul."

"My immortal *soul* lif with the Padre at the Mission—you moost seek her there! My mortal *body*," she added, with a mischievous smile, "say to you, 'good a' night, Don Esteban.'" She dropped him a little curtsey and—ran away.

"One moment, Miss Ramirez," said Masterton eagerly; but she had already slipped beyond his reach. He saw

her little black figure passing swiftly beside the moonlight wall, saw it suddenly slide into a shadowy fissure and vanish.

In his blank disappointment, he could not bear to re-enter the house he had left so sanguinely a few moments before, but walked moodily in the garden. His discomfiture was the more complete since he felt that his defeat was owing to some mistake in his methods, and not the incorrigibility of his subject.

Was it not a spiritual weakness in him to have resented so sharply the girl's imputation that he wished to make love to her? He should have borne it as Christians had even before now borne slander and false testimony for their faith! He might even have *accepted it*, and let the triumph of her conversion in the end prove his innocence. Or was his purpose incompatible with that sisterly affection he had so often preached to the women of his flock? He might have taken her hand, and called her "Sister Pepita," even as he had called Deborah "Sister." He recalled the fact that he had for an instant held her struggling in his arms: he remembered the thrill that the recollection had caused him, and somehow it now sent a burning blush across his face. He hurried back into the house.

The next day a thousand wild ideas took the place of his former settled resolution. He would seek the Padre, this custodian of the young girl's soul; he would convince *him* of *his* error, or beseech him to give him an equal access to her spirit! He would seek the uncle of the girl and work upon his feelings.

Then for three or four days he resolved to put the young girl from his mind, trusting after the fashion of his kind for some special revelation from a supreme source as an indication for his conduct. This revelation presently occurred, as it is apt to occur when wanted.

One evening his heart leaped at the familiar sound of Pepita's guitar in the distance. Whatever his ultimate intention now, he hurriedly ran into the garden. The sound came from the former direction, but as he unhesitatingly approached the Mission wall, he could see that she was not upon it, and as the notes of her guitar were struck again, he knew that they came from the other side. But the chords were a prelude to one of his own hymns, and he stood entranced as her sweet, child-like voice rose with the very words that he had sung. The few defects were those of purely oral imitation, the accents, even the slight reiteration of the "s," were Pepita's own—

"Cheeldren oof the Heavenly King,
As ye journey essweetly ssing ;
Essing your great Redeemer's praise,
Glorioos in Hees works and ways."

He was astounded. Her recollection of the air and words was the more wonderful, for he remembered now that he had only sung that particular hymn once. But to his still greater delight and surprise, her voice rose again in the second verse, with a touch of plaintiveness that swelled his throat—

" We are travelling home to God,
In the way our farzers trod ;
They are happy now, and we
Soon their happiness shall see."

The simple, almost childish words—so childish that they might have been the fitting creation of her own childish lips—here died away with a sweep and crash of the whole strings. Breathless silence followed, in which Stephen Masterton could feel the beatings of his own heart.

"Miss Ramirez," he called, in a voice that scarcely seemed his own. There was no reply. "Pepita!" he

repeated ; it was strangely like the accent of a lover, but he no longer cared. Still the singer's voice was silent.

Then he ran swiftly beside the wall, as he had seen her run, until he came to the fissure. It was overgrown with vines and brambles almost as impenetrable as an abattis, but if she had pierced it in her delicate crape dress, so could he ! He brushed roughly through, and found himself in a glimmering aisle of pear trees close by the white wall of the Mission church.

For a moment, in that intricate tracing of ebony and ivory made by the rising moon, he was dazzled, but evidently his irruption into the orchard had not been as lithe and silent as her own, for a figure in a parti-coloured dress suddenly started into activity, and running from the wall, began to course through the trees until it became apparently a part of that involved pattern. Nothing daunted, however, Stephen Masterton pursued ; his speed increased as he recognised the flounces of Pepita's barred dress, but the young girl had the advantage of knowing the locality, and could evade her pursuer by unsuspected turns and doubles.

For some moments this fanciful sylvan chase was kept up in perfect silence ; it might have been a woodland nymph pursued by a wandering shepherd. Masterton presently saw that she was making towards a tiled roof that was now visible as projecting over the Presidio wall, and was evidently her goal of refuge. He redoubled his speed ; with skilful audacity and sheer strength of his broad shoulders he broke through a dense *Ceanothus* hedge which Pepita was swiftly skirting, and suddenly appeared between her and her house.

With her first cry, the young girl turned and tried to bury herself in the hedge ; but in another stride the Circuit Preacher was at her side, and caught her panting figure in his arms.

While he had been running he had swiftly formulated what he should do and what he should say to her. To his simple appeal for her companionship and willing ear he would add a brotherly tenderness, that should invite her trustfulness in him; he would confess his wrong and ask her forgiveness of his abrupt solicitations; he would propose to teach her more hymns, they would practise psalmody together; even this priest, the custodian of her soul, could not object to that; but chiefly he would thank her: he would tell her how she had pleased him, and this would lead to more serious and thoughtful converse. All this was in his mind while he ran, was upon his lips as he caught her, and for an instant she lapsed, exhausted, in his arms. But, alas! even in that moment he suddenly drew her towards him, and kissed her as only a lover could!

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The wire grass was already yellowing on the Tasajasa plains with the dusty decay of the long, dry summer, when Dr. Duchesne returned to Tasajasa. He came to see the wife of Deacon Sanderson, who, having for the twelfth time added to the population of the settlement, was not "doing as well" as everybody—except, possibly, Dr. Duchesne—expected. After he had made this hollow-eyed, over-burdened, under-nourished woman as comfortable as he could in her rude, neglected surroundings, to change the dreary chronicle of suffering, he turned to the husband, and said, "And what has become of Mr. Masterton, who used to be in your—vocation?" A long groan came from the Deacon.

"Hallo! I hope he has not had a relapse," said the Doctor earnestly. "I thought I'd knocked all that nonsense out of him—I beg your pardon—I mean," he

added hurriedly, "he wrote to me only a few weeks ago that he was picking up his strength again and doing well!"

"In his weak, gross, sinful flesh—yes, no doubt," returned the Deacon scornfully, "and, perhaps, even in a worldly sense, for those who value the vanities of life; but he is lost to us, for all time, and lost to eternal life for ever. Not," he continued in sanctimonious vindictiveness, "but that I often had my doubts of Brother Masterton's steadfastness. He was too much given to imagery and song."

"But *what* has he done?" persisted Dr. Duchesne.

"Done! He has embraced the Scarlet Woman!"

"Dear me!" said the Doctor, "so soon? Is it anybody you knew here?—not anybody's wife? Eh?"

"He has entered the Church of Rome," said the Deacon indignantly; "he has forsaken the God of his fathers for the tents of the idolaters; he is the consort of Papists and the slave of the Pope!"

"But are you *sure*?" said Dr. Duchesne, with perhaps less concern than before.

"Sure," returned the Deacon angrily, "didn't Brother Bulkley, on account of warning reports made by a God-fearing and soul-seeking teamster, make a special pilgrimage to this land of Sodom to inquire and spy out its wickedness? Didn't he find Stephen Masterton steeped in the iniquity of practising on an organ—he that scorned even a violin or harmonium in the tents of the Lord—in an idolatrous chapel, with a foreign female Papist for a teacher? Didn't he find him a guest at the board of a Jesuit priest, visiting the schools of the Mission where this young Jezebel of a singer teaches the children to chant in unknown tongues? Didn't he find him living with a wrinkled Indian witch who called him 'Padrone,' and speaking her gibberish?"

Didn't they find him, who left here a man mortified in flesh and spirit and pale with striving with sinners, fat and rosy from native wines and flesh-pots, and even vain and gaudy in coloured apparel? And last of all, didn't Brother Bulkley hear that a rumour was spread far and wide that this miserable backslider was to take to himself a wife—in one of these strange women—that very Jezebel who seduced him? What do you call that?"

"It looks a good deal like human nature," said the Doctor musingly, "but *I* call it a cure!"

The Indiscretion of Elsbeth.

THE American paused. He had evidently lost his way. For the last half-hour he had been wandering in a mediæval town, in a profound mediæval dream. Only a few days had elapsed since he had left the steamship that carried him hither; and the accents of his own tongue, the idioms of his own people, and the sympathetic community of New World tastes and expressions still filled his mind, until he woke up, or rather, as it seemed to him, was falling asleep in the past of this Old World town which had once held his ancestors. Although a republican, he had liked to think of them in quaint distinctive garb, representing State and importance—perhaps even aristocratic pre-eminence—content to let the responsibility of such “bad eminence” rest with them entirely, but a habit of conscientiousness and love for historic truth eventually led him also to regard an honest *Bauer* standing beside his cattle in the quaint market-place, or a kindly-faced, black-eyed *Dienstmädchen* in a doorway, with a timid, respectful interest, as a possible type of his progenitors. For, unlike some of his travelling countrymen in Europe, he was not a snob, and it struck him—as an American—that it was, perhaps, better to think of his race as having improved than as having degenerated. In these ingenuous meditations he had passed the long rows of quaint, high houses, whose sagging roofs and unpatched dilapidations were yet far removed from squalor, until he had reached the road bordered by poplars, all so

unlike his own country's waysides—and knew that he had wandered far from his hotel.

He did not care, however, to retrace his steps and return by the way he had come. There was, he reasoned, some other street or turning that would eventually bring him to the market-place and his hotel, and yet extend his experience of the town. He turned at right angles into a narrow grass lane, which was, however, as neatly kept and apparently as public as the highway. A few moments' walking convinced him that it was not a thoroughfare, and that it led to the open gates of a park. This had something of a public look, which suggested that his intrusion might be, at least, a pardonable trespass, and he relied, like most strangers, on the exonerating quality of a stranger's ignorance. The park lay in the direction he wished to go, and yet it struck him as singular that a park of such extent should be allowed to still occupy such valuable urban space. Indeed, its length seemed to be illimitable as he wandered on, until he became conscious that he must have again lost his way, and he diverged toward the only boundary, a high, thickset hedge to the right, whose line he had been following.

As he neared it he heard the sound of voices on the other side, speaking in German, with which he was unfamiliar. Having as yet met no one, and being now impressed with the fact that for a public place the park was singularly deserted, he was conscious that his position was getting serious, and he determined to take this only chance of inquiring his way. The hedge was thinner in some places than in others, and at times he could see not only the light through it but even the moving figures of the speakers, and the occasional white flash of a summer gown. At last he determined to penetrate it, and with little difficulty emerged on the other side. But here he paused motionless. He found himself behind a somewhat

formal and symmetrical group of figures with their backs toward him, but all stiffened into attitudes as motionless as his own, and all gazing with a monotonous intensity in the direction of a handsome building, which had been invisible above the hedge, but which now seemed to arise suddenly before him. Some of the figures were in uniform. Immediately before him, but so slightly separated from the others that he was enabled to see the house between her and her companions, he was confronted by the pretty back, shoulders, and blonde braids of a young girl of twenty. Convinced that he had unwittingly intruded upon some august ceremonial, he instantly slipped back into the hedge, but so silently that his momentary presence was evidently undetected. When he regained the park side he glanced back through the interstices; there was no movement of the figures nor break in the silence to indicate that his intrusion had been observed. With a long breath of relief he hurried from the park.

It was late when he finally got back to his hotel. But his little modern adventure had, I fear, quite outrun his previous mediaeval reflections, and almost his first inquiry of the silver-chained porter in the courtyard was in regard to the park. There was no public park in Alstadt! The Herr possibly alluded to the Hof Gardens—the Schloss, which was in the direction he indicated. The Schloss was the residency of the hereditary Grand Duke. *Ja wohl!* He was stopping there with several *Hoheiten*. There was naturally a party there—a family reunion. But it was a private enclosure. At times, when the Grand Duke was not “in residence,” it was open to the public. In point of fact, at such times tickets of admission were to be had at the hotel for fifty pfennige each. There was not, of truth, much to see except a model farm and dairy—the pretty toy of a previous Grand Duchess.

But he seemed destined to come into closer collision with the modern life of Alstadt. On entering the hotel, wearied by his long walk, he passed the landlord and a man in half-military uniform on the landing near his room. As he entered his apartment he had a vague impression, without exactly knowing why, that the landlord and the military stranger had just left it. This feeling was deepened by the evident disarrangement of certain articles in his unlocked portmanteau and the disorganisation of his writing-case. A wave of indignation passed over him. It was followed by a knock at the door, and the landlord blandly appeared with the stranger.

"A thousand pardons," said the former smilingly, "but Herr Sanderman, the Ober-Inspector of Police, wishes to speak with you. I hope we are not intruding?"

"Not now," said the American drily.

The two exchanged a vacant and deprecating smile.

"I have to ask only a few formal questions," said the Ober-Inspector in excellent but somewhat precise English, "to supplement the report which, as a stranger, you may not know is required by the police from the landlord in regard to the names and quality of his guests who are foreign to the town. You have a passport?"

"I have," said the American still more drily. "But I do not keep it in an unlocked portmanteau or an open writing-case."

"An admirable precaution," said Sanderman with unmoved politeness. "May I see it? Thanks," he added, glancing over the document which the American produced from his pocket. "I see that you are a born American citizen—and an earlier knowledge of that fact would have prevented this little *contretemps*. You are aware, Mr. Hoffman, that your name is German?"

"It was borne by my ancestors, who came from this country two centuries ago," said Hoffman curtly.

"We are indeed honoured by your return to it," returned Sanderman suavely, "but it was the circumstance of your name being a local one, and the possibility of your still being a German citizen liable to unperformed military duty, which has caused the trouble." His manner was clearly civil and courteous, but Hoffman felt that all the time his own face and features were undergoing a profound scrutiny from the speaker.

"And you are making sure that you will know me again?" said Hoffman with a smile.

"I trust, indeed, both," returned Sanderman with a bow, "although you will permit me to say that your description here," pointing to the passport, "scarcely does you justice. *Ach Gott!* it is the same in all countries; the official eye is not that of the young *Damen*."

Hoffman, though not conceited, had not lived twenty years without knowing that he was very good-looking, yet there was something in the remark that caused him to colour with a new uneasiness. The Ober-Inspector rose with another bow, and moved toward the door. "I hope you will let me make amends for this intrusion by doing anything I can to render your visit here a pleasant one. Perhaps," he added, "it is not for long?"

But Hoffman evaded the evident question as he resented what he imagined was a possible sneer.

"I have not yet determined my movements," he said.

The Ober-Inspector brought his heels together in a somewhat stiffer military salute and departed.

Nothing, however, could have exceeded the later almost servile urbanity of the landlord, who seemed to have been proud of the official visit to his guest. He was profuse in his attentions, and even introduced him to a singularly artistic-looking man of middle age, wearing an order in his buttonhole, whom he met casually in the hall.

"Our Court photographer," explained the landlord with some fervour, "at whose studio, only a few houses distant, most of the *Hoheiten* and *Prinzessinnen* of Germany have sat for their likenesses."

"I should feel honoured if the distinguished American Herr would give me a visit," said the stranger gravely, as he gazed at Hoffman with an intensity which recalled the previous scrutiny of the Police-Inspector, "and I would be charmed if he would avail himself of my poor skill to transmit his picturesque features to my unique collection."

Hoffman returned a polite evasion to this invitation, although he was conscious of being struck with this second examination of his face, and the allusion to his personality.

The next morning the porter met him with a mysterious air. The Herr would still like to see the Schloss? Hoffman, who had quite forgotten his adventure in the park, looked vacant. *Ja wohl*—the Hof authorities had no doubt heard of his visit and had intimated to the hotel proprietor that he might have permission to visit the model farm and dairy. As the American still looked indifferent, the porter pointed out with some importance that it was a Ducal courtesy not to be lightly treated; that few, indeed, of the burghers themselves had ever been admitted to this eccentric whim of the late Grand Duchess. He would, of course, be silent about it; the Court would not like it known that they had made an exception to their rules in favour of a foreigner; he would enter quickly and boldly alone. There would be a housekeeper or a dairymaid to show him over the place.

More amused at this important mystery over what he, as an American, was inclined to classify as a "free pass" to a somewhat heavy "side show," he gravely accepted the permission, and the next morning after breakfast set out to visit the model farm and dairy. Dismissing his driver,

as he had been instructed, Hoffman entered the gateway with a mingling of expectancy and a certain amusement over the "boldness" which the porter had suggested should characterise his entrance. Before him was a beautifully kept lane bordered by arboured and trellised roses, which seemed to sink into the distance. He was instinctively following it when he became aware that he was mysteriously accompanied by a man in the livery of a *chasseur*, who was walking among the trees almost abreast of him, keeping pace with his step, and after the first introductory military salute preserving a ceremonious silence. There was something so ludicrous in this solemn procession toward a peaceful, rural industry, that by the time they had reached the bottom of the lane the American had quite recovered his good humour. But here a new astonishment awaited him. Nestling before him in a green amphitheatre lay a little wooden farmyard and outbuildings, which irresistibly suggested that it had been recently unpacked and set up from a box of Nuremberg toys. The symmetrical trees, the galleried houses with preternaturally glazed windows, even the spotty, disproportionately sized cows in the white-fenced barnyards, were all unreal, wooden, and toylike.

Crossing a miniature bridge over a little stream, from which he was quite prepared to hook metallic fish with a magnet their own size, he looked about him for some real being to dispel the illusion. The mysterious *chasseur* had disappeared. But under the arch of an arbour, which seemed to be composed of silk ribbons, green glass, and pink tissue paper, stood a quaint but delightful figure.

At first it seemed as if he had only dispelled one illusion for another. For the figure before him might have been made of Dresden china—so daintily delicate and unique it was in colour and arrangement. It was that of a young girl dressed in some forgotten mediæval peasant garb of velvet

braids, silver stay-laced corsage, lace sleeves, and helmeted metallic comb. But, after the Dresden method, the pale yellow of her hair was repeated in her bodice, the pink of her cheeks was in the roses of her chintz overskirt. The blue of her eyes was the blue of her petticoat; the dazzling whiteness of her neck shone again in the sleeves and stockings. Nevertheless she was real and human, for the pink deepened in her cheeks as Hoffman's hat flew from his head, and she recognised the civility with a grave little curtsey.

"You have come to see the dairy," she said in quaintly accurate English. "I will show you the way."

"If you please," said Hoffman gaily, "but—"

"But what?" she said, facing him suddenly with absolutely astonished eyes.

Hoffman looked into them so long that their frank wonder presently contracted into an ominous mingling of restraint and resentment. Nothing daunted, however, he went on—"Couldn't we shake all that?"

The look of wonder returned. "Shake all that?" she repeated. "I do not understand."

"Well! I'm not positively aching to see cows, and you must be sick of showing them. I think, too, I've about sized the whole show. Wouldn't it be better if we sat down in that arbour—supposing it won't fall down—and you told me all about the lot? It would save you a heap of trouble and keep your pretty frock cleaner than trapesing round. Of course," he said, with a quick transition to the gentlest courtesy, "if you're conscientious about this thing we'll go on and not spare a cow. Consider me in it with you for the whole morning."

She looked at him again, and then suddenly broke into a charming laugh. It revealed a set of strong white teeth, as well as a certain barbaric trace in its cadence which civilised restraint had not entirely overlaid.

"I suppose she really is a peasant, in spite of that pretty frock," he said to himself as he laughed too.

But her face presently took a shade of reserve, and with a gentle but singular significance she said—

"I think you must see the dairy."

Hoffman's hat was in his hand with a vivacity that tumbled the brown curls on his forehead. "By all means," he said instantly, and began walking by her side in modest but easy silence. Now that he thought her a conscientious peasant he was quiet and respectful.

Presently she listed her eyes, which, despite her gravity, had not entirely lost their previous mirthfulness, and said—

"But you Americans—in your rich and prosperous country, with your large lands and your great harvests—you must know all about farming."

"Never was in a dairy in my life," said Hoffman gravely. "I'm from the city of New York, where the cows give swill milk and are kept in cellars."

Her eyebrows contracted prettily in an effort to understand. Then she apparently gave it up and said with a slanting glint of mischief in her eyes—

"Then you come here, like the other Americans, in hope to see the Grand Duke and Duchess and the Princesses?"

"No. The fact is I almost tumbled into a lot of 'em—standing like wax figures—the other side of the park lodge, the other day—and got away as soon as I could. I think I prefer the cows."

Her head was slightly turned away. He had to content himself with looking down upon the strong feet in their serviceable but smartly buckled shoes that uplifted her upright figure as she moved beside him.

"Of course," he added with boyish but unmistakable courtesy, "if it's part of your show to trot out the family,

why I'm in that too. I dare say you could make them interesting."

"But why," she said, with her head still slightly turned away toward a figure—a sturdy-looking woman, which, for the first time, Hoffman perceived was walking in a line with them as the *chasseur* had done—"why did you come here at all?"

"The first time was a fool accident," he returned frankly. "I was making a short cut through what I thought was a public park. The second time was because I had been rude to a Police-Inspector whom I found going through my things, but who apologised—as I suppose—by getting me an invitation from the Grand Duke to come here, and I thought it only the square thing to both of 'em to accept it. But I'm mighty glad I came; I wouldn't have missed *you* for a thousand dollars. You see I haven't struck any one I cared to talk to since—" Here he suddenly remarked that she hadn't looked at him, and that the delicate whiteness of her neck was quite suffused with pink, and stopped instantly. Presently he said quite easily—

"Who's the chorus?"

"The lady?"

"Yes. She's watching us as if she didn't quite approve, you know—as if she didn't catch on."

"She's the head housekeeper of the farm. Perhaps you would prefer to have her show you the dairy; shall I call her?"

The figure in question was very short and stout, with voluminous petticoats.

"Please don't; I'll stay without your setting that paper-weight on me. But here's the dairy. Don't let her come inside among those pans of fresh milk with that smile, or there'll be trouble."

The young girl paused too, made a slight gesture with

her hand, and the figure passed on as they entered the dairy. It was beautifully clean and fresh. With a persistence that he quickly recognised as mischievous and ironical, and with his characteristic adaptability accepted with even greater gravity and assumption of interest, she showed him all the details. Thence they passed to the farmyard, where he hung with breathless attention over the names of the cows and made her repeat them. Although she was evidently familiar with the subject, he could see that her zeal was fitful and impatient.

"Suppose we sit down," he said, pointing to an ostentatious rustic seat in the centre of the green.

"Sit down?" she repeated wonderingly. "What for?"

"To talk. We'll knock off and call it half a day."

"But if you are not looking at the farm you are, of course, going," she said quickly.

"Am I? I don't think these particulars were in my invitation."

She again broke into a fit of laughter, and, at the same time, cast a bright eye around the field.

"Come," he said gently, "there are no other sightseers waiting, and your conscience is clear," and he moved toward the rustic seat.

"Certainly not—there," she added in a low voice.

They moved on slowly together to a copse of willows which overhung the miniature stream.

"You are not staying long in Alstadt?" she said.

"No; I only came to see the old town that my ancestors came from."

They were walking so close together that her skirt brushed his trousers, but she suddenly drew away from him, and looking him fixedly in the eye, said—

"Ah, you have relations here?"

"Yes, but they are dead two hundred years."

She laughed again with a slight expression of relief. They had entered the copse and were walking in dense shadow when she suddenly stopped and sat down upon a rustic bench. To his surprise he found that they were quite alone.

"Tell me about these relatives," she said, slightly drawing aside her skirt to make room for him on the seat.

He did not require a second invitation. He not only told her all about his ancestral progenitors, but, I fear, even about those more recent and more nearly related to him; about his own life, his vocation—he was a clever newspaper correspondent with a roving commission—his ambitions, his beliefs, and his romance.

"And then, perhaps, of this visit—you will also make 'copy'?"

He smiled at her quick adaptation of his professional slang, but shook his head.

"No," he said gravely. "No—this is *you*. The *Chicago Interviewer* is big pay and is rich, but it hasn't capital enough to buy you from me."

He gently slid his hand toward hers and slipped his fingers softly around it. She made a slight movement of withdrawal, but even then—as if in forgetfulness or indifference—permitted her hand to rest unresponsively in his. It was scarcely an encouragement to gallantry, neither was it a rejection of an unconscious familiarity.

"But you haven't told me about yourself," he said.

"Oh, I—" she returned, with her first approach to coquetry in a laugh and a sidelong glance; "of what importance is that to you? It is the Grand Duchess and Her Highness the Princess that you Americans seek to know. I am—what I am—as you see."

"You bet," said Hoffman, with charming decision.

"I *what*?"

"You are, you know, and that's good enough for me, but I don't even know your name."

She laughed again, and after a pause said "Elsbeth."

"But I couldn't call you by your first name on our first meeting, you know."

"Then you Americans are really so very formal—eh?" she said slyly, looking at her imprisoned hand.

"Well, yes," returned Hoffman. "I suppose we are respectful, or mean to be. But whom am I to inquire for? To write to?"

"You are neither to write nor inquire."

"What?"

She had moved in her seat so as to half face him with eyes in which curiosity, mischief, and a certain seriousness alternated, but for the first time seemed conscious of his hand, and accented her words with a slight pressure.

"You are to return to your hotel presently and say to your landlord, 'Pack up my luggage. I have finished with this old town and my ancestors, and the Grand Duke whom I do not care to see, and I shall leave Alstadt to-morrow!'"

"Thank you! I don't catch on."

"Of what necessity should you? I have said it. That should be enough for a chivalrous American like you." She again significantly looked down at her hand.

"If you mean that you know the extent of the favour you ask of me, I can say no more," he said seriously; "but give me some reason for it."

"Ah so!" she said, with a slight shrug of her shoulders. "Then I must tell you. You say you do not know the Grand Duke and Duchess. Well! *they know you?* The day before yesterday you were wandering in the park, as you admit. You say, also, you got through the hedge and interrupted some ceremony. That ceremony was not a

Court function, Mr. Hoffman, but something equally sacred—the photographing of the Ducal family before the Schloss, You say that you instantly withdrew. But after the photograph was taken the plate revealed a stranger standing actually by the side of the Princess Alexandrine, and even taking the *pas* of the Grand Duke himself. That stranger was you!"

"And the picture was spoiled," said the American, with a quiet laugh.

"I should not say that," returned the lady, with a demure glance at her companion's handsome face, "and I do not believe that the Princess—who first saw the photograph—thought so either. But she is very young and wilful, and has the reputation of being very indiscreet, and unfortunately she begged the photographer not to destroy the plate, but to give it to her, and to say nothing about it, except that the plate was defective, and to take another. Still it would have ended there if her curiosity had not led her to confide a description of the stranger to the Police-Inspector, with the result you know."

"Then I am expected to leave town because I accidentally stumbled into a family group that was being photographed?"

"Because a certain Princess was indiscreet enough to show her curiosity about you," corrected the fair stranger.

"But look here! I'll apologise to the Princess, and offer to pay for the plate."

"Then you do want to see the Princess?" said the young girl, smiling; "you are like the others."

"Bother the Princess! I want to see *you*. And I don't see how they can prevent it if I choose to remain."

"Very easily. You will find that there is something wrong with your passport, and you will be sent on to Pumpernickel for examination. You will unwittingly trans-

gress some of the laws of the town and be ordered to leave it. You will be shadowed by the police until you quarrel with them—like a free American—and you are conducted to the frontier. Perhaps you will strike an officer who has insulted you, and then you are finished on the spot."

The American's crest rose palpably until it cocked his straw hat over his curls.

"Suppose I am content to risk it—having first laid the whole matter and its trivial cause before the American Minister, so that he could make it hot for this whole caboodle of a country if they happened to 'down me.' By Jove! I shouldn't mind being the martyr of an international episode if they'd spare me long enough to let me get the first 'copy' over to the other side." His eyes sparkled.

"You could expose them, but they would then deny the whole story, and you have no evidence. They would demand to know your informant, and I should be disgraced, and the Princess, who is already talked about, made a subject of scandal. But no matter! It is right that an American's independence shall not be interfered with."

She raised the hem of her handkerchief to her blue eyes and slightly turned her head aside. Hoffman gently drew the handkerchief away, and in so doing possessed himself of her other hand.

"Look here, Miss—Miss—Elsbeth. You know I wouldn't give you away, whatever happened. But couldn't I get hold of that photographer—I saw him, he wanted me to sit to him—and make him tell me?"

"He wanted you to sit to him," she said hurriedly, "and did you?"

"No," he replied. "He was a little too fresh and previous, though I thought he fancied some resemblance in me to somebody else."

"Ah!" She said something to herself in German which he did not understand, and then added aloud—

"You did well; he is a bad man this photographer. Promise me you shall not sit for him."

"How can I if I'm fired out of the place like this?" He added ruefully, "But I'd like to make him give himself away to me somehow."

"He will not, and if he did he would deny it afterward. Do not go near him nor see him. Be careful that he does not photograph you with his instantaneous instrument when you are passing. Now you must go. I must see the Princess."

"Let me go, too. I will explain it to her," said Hoffman. She stopped, looked at him keenly and attempted to withdraw her hands. "Ah, then it *is* so. It is the Princess you wish to see. You are curious—you, too; you wish to see this lady who is interested in you. I ought to have known it. You are all alike."

He met her gaze with laughing frankness, accepting her outburst as a charming feminine weakness, half jealousy, half coquetry—but retained her hands.

"Nonsense," he said. "I wish to see her that I may have the right to see you—that you shall not lose your place here through me; that I may come again."

"You must never come here again."

"Then you must come where I am. We will meet somewhere when you have an afternoon off. You shall show me the town—the houses of my ancestors—their tombs; possibly—if the Grand Duke rampages—the probable site of my own."

She looked into his laughing eyes with her clear, steadfast, gravely questioning blue ones. "Do not you Americans know that it is not the fashion here, in Germany, for the young men and the young women to walk together—unless they are *verlobt*?"

"Ver—which?"

"Engaged." She nodded her head thrice: viciously, decidedly, mischievously.

"So much the better."

"*Ach Gott!*" She made a gesture of hopelessness at his incorrigibility, and again attempted to withdraw her hands.

"I must go now."

"Well then, good-bye."

It was easy to draw her closer by simply lowering her still captive hands. Then he suddenly kissed her coldly startled lips, and instantly released her. She as instantly vanished.

"Elsbeth," he called quickly. "Elsbeth!"

Her now really frightened face reappeared with a heightened colour from the dense foliage—quite to his astonishment.

"Hush," she said with her finger on her lips. "Are you mad?"

"I only wanted to remind you to square me with the Princess," he laughed, as her head disappeared.

He strolled back toward the gate. Scarcely had he quitted the shrubbery before the same *chasseur* made his appearance with precisely the same salute; and, keeping exactly the same distance, accompanied him to the gate. At the corner of the street he hailed a drosky and was driven to his hotel.

The landlord came up smiling. He trusted that the Herr had greatly enjoyed himself at the Schloss. It was a distinguished honour—in fact, quite unprecedented. Hoffman, while he determined not to commit himself nor his late fair companion, was, nevertheless, anxious to learn something more of her relations to the Schloss. So pretty, so characteristic and marked a figure must be well known

to sightseers. Indeed, once or twice the idea had crossed his mind with a slightly jealous twinge that left him more conscious of the impression she had made on him than he had deemed possible. He asked if the model farm and dairy were always shown by the same attendants.

"*Ach Gott!* no doubt, yes; His Royal Highness had quite a retinue when he was in residence."

"And were these attendants in costume?"

"There was undoubtedly a livery for the servants."

Hoffman felt a slight republican irritation at the epithet—he knew not why. But this costume was rather an historical one; surely it was not entrusted to everyday menials—and he briefly described it.

His host's blank curiosity suddenly changed to a look of mysterious and arch intelligence.

"*Ach Gott!* yes!" He remembered now (with his finger on his nose) that when there was a *Fest* at the Schloss the farm and dairy were filled with shepherdesses, in quaint costume worn by the ladies of the Grand Duke's own theatrical company, who assumed the characters with great vivacity. Surely it was the same, and the Grand Duke had treated the Herr to this special courtesy. Yes—there was one pretty, blonde young lady—the Fräulein Wimpfenbuttel, a most popular soubrette, who would play it to the life! And the description fitted her to a hair! Ah, there was no doubt of it; many persons, indeed, had been so deceived.

But happily, now that he had given him the wink, the Herr could corroborate it himself by going to the theatre to-night. Ah, it would be a great joke—quite colossal! if he took a front seat where she could see him. And the good man rubbed his hands in gleeful anticipation.

Hoffman had listened to him with a slow repugnance that was only equal to his gradual conviction that the

explanation was a true one, and that he himself had been ridiculously deceived. The mystery of his fair companion's costume, which he had accepted as part of the "show"; the inconsistency of her manner and her evident occupation; her undeniable wish to terminate the whole episode with that single interview; her mingling of worldly *aplomb* and rustic innocence; her perfect self-control and experienced acceptance of his gallantry under the simulated attitude of simplicity—all now struck him as perfectly comprehensible. He recalled the actress's inimitable touch in certain picturesque realistic details in the dairy—which she had not spared him; he recognised it now even in their bowered confidences (how like a pretty ballet scene their whole interview on the rustic bench was!), and it breathed through their entire conversation—to their theatrical parting at the close! And the whole story of the photograph was, no doubt, as pure a dramatic invention as the rest! The Princess's romantic interest in him—that Princess who had never appeared (why had he not detected the old, well-worn, sentimental situation here?)—was all a part of it. The dark, mysterious hints of his persecution by the police were a necessary culmination to the little farce. Thank Heaven! he had not "risen" at the Princess, even if he had given himself away to the clever actress in her own humble *rôle*. Then the humour of the whole situation predominated and he laughed until the tears came to his eyes, and his forgotten ancestors might have turned over in their graves without his heeding them. And with this humanising influence upon him he went to the theatre.

It was capacious even for the town, and although the performance was a special one, he had no difficulty in getting a whole box to himself. He tried to avoid this public isolation by sitting close to the next box, where there was a solitary occupant—an officer—apparently as

lonely as himself. He had made up his mind that when his fair deceiver appeared he would let her see by his significant applause that he recognised her, but bore no malice for the trick she had played on him. After all, he had kissed her—he had no right to complain. If she should recognise him, and this recognition led to a withdrawal of her prohibition, and their better acquaintance, he would be a fool to cavil at her pleasant artifice. Her vocation was certainly a more independent and original one than that he had supposed; for its social equality and inequality he cared nothing. He found himself longing for the glance of her calm blue eyes, for the pleasant smile that broke the seriousness of her sweetly restrained lips. There was no doubt that he should know her even as the heroine of the “Czar und der Zimmerman” on the bill before him. He was becoming impatient. And the performance evidently was waiting. A stir in the outer gallery, the clatter of sabres, the filing of uniforms into the Royal box, and a triumphant burst from the orchestra showed the cause. As a few ladies and gentlemen in full evening dress emerged from the background of uniforms and took their places in the front of the box Hoffman looked with some interest for the romantic Princess. Suddenly he saw a face and shoulders in a glitter of diamonds that startled him, and then a glance that transfixed him.

He leaned over to his neighbour. “Who is the young lady in the box?”

“The Princess Alexandrine.”

“I mean the young lady in blue with blonde hair and blue eyes.”

“It is the Princess Alexandrine Elsbeth Marie Stephanie, the daughter of the Grand Duke—there is none other there.”

“Thank you.”

He sat silently looking at the rising curtain and the stage. Then he rose quietly, gathered his hat and coat and left the box. When he reached the gallery he turned instinctively and looked back at the Royal box. Her eyes had followed him, and as he remained a moment motionless in the doorway, her lips parted in a grateful smile, and she waved her fan with a faint but unmistakable gesture of farewell.

The next morning he left Alstadt. There was some little delay at the *Zoll* on the frontier, and when Hoffman received back his trunk it was accompanied by a little sealed packet which was handed to him by the Custom-house Inspector. Hoffman did not open it until he was alone.

There hangs upon the wall of his modest apartment in New York a narrow, irregular photograph ingeniously framed, of himself standing side by side with a young German girl, who, in the estimation of his compatriots, is by no means stylish and only passably good-looking. When he is joked by his friends about the post of honour given to this production, and questioned as to the lady, he remains silent. The Princess Alexandrine Elsbeth Marie Stephanie von Westphalen-Alstadt, among her other Royal qualities, knew whom to trust.

The Devotion of Enriquez.

IN a previous chronicle which dealt with the exploits of "Chu Chu," a Californian mustang,¹ I gave some space to the accomplishments of Enriquez Saltillo, who assisted me in training her, and who was also brother to Consuelo Saltillo, the young lady to whom I had freely given both the mustang and my youthful affections. I consider it a proof of the superiority of masculine friendship that neither the subsequent desertion of the mustang nor the young lady ever made the slightest difference to Enriquez or me in our exalted amity. To a wondering doubt as to what I ever could possibly have seen in his sister to admire he joined a tolerant scepticism of the whole sex. This he was wont to express in that marvellous combination of Spanish precision and Californian slang for which he was justly famous. "As to thees women and their little game," he would say, "believe me, my friend, your old Uncle 'Enry is not in it. No; he will ever take a back seat when *lose* is around. For why? Regard me here! If she is a horse, you shall say, 'She will buck-jump,' 'She will *ess-shy*,' 'She will not arrive,' or 'She wiil arrive too quick.' But if it is thees women, where are you? For when you shall say, 'She will *ess-shy*,' look you, she will walk straight; or she will remain tranquil when you think she buck-jump; or else she will arrive and, look you, you will not. You shall get lef^t. It

¹ See "The Bell-Ringer of Angel's," &c.

is ever so. My father and the brother of my father have both make court to my mother when she was but a *señorita*. My father think she have lose his brother more. So he say to her: 'It is enose! Tranquillise yourself. I will go. I will efface myself. Adios! Shake hands! Ta-ta! So long! See you again in the fall.' And what make my mother? Regard me! She marry my father—on the instant! Of thees women, believe me, Pancho, you shall know nothing. Not even if they shall make you the son of your father or his nephew."

I have recalled this characteristic speech to show the general tendency of Enriquez' convictions at the opening of this little story. It is only fair to say, however, that his usual attitude toward the sex he so cheerfully maligned exhibited little apprehension or caution in dealing with them. Among the frivolous and light-minded intermixture of his race he moved with great freedom and popularity. He danced well; when we went to fandangos together his agility and the audacity of his figures always procured him the prettiest partners, his professed sentiments, I presume, shielding him from subsequent jealousies, heart-burnings, or envy. I have a vivid recollection of him in the mysteries of the *sembicuacua*, a somewhat corybantic dance which left much to the invention of the performers, and very little to the imagination of the spectator. In one of the figures a gaudy handkerchief, waved more or less gracefully by dancer and danseuse before the dazzled eyes of each other, acted as love's signal, and was used to express alternate admiration and indifference, shyness and audacity, fear and transport, coyness and coquetry, as the dance proceeded. I need not say that Enriquez' pantomimic illustration of these emotions was peculiarly extravagant; but it was always performed and accepted with a gravity that was an essential feature of the dance. At such times sighs would escape

him which were supposed to portray the incipient stages of passion; snorts of jealousy burst from him at the suggestion of a rival; he was overtaken by a sort of St. Vitus's dance that expressed his timidity in making the first advances of affection; the scorn of his lady-love struck him with something like a dumb ague; and a single gesture of invitation from her produced marked delirium. All this was very like Enriquez; but on the particular occasion to which I refer, I think no one was prepared to see him begin the figure with the waving of *four* handkerchiefs! Yet this he did, pirouetting, capering, brandishing his silken signals like a ballerina's scarf in the languishment or fire of passion, until, in a final figure, where the conquered and submitting fair one usually sinks into the arms of her partner, need it be said that the ingenious Enriquez was found in the centre of the floor supporting four of the dancers! Yet he was by no means unduly excited either by the plaudits of the crowd or by his evident success with the fair. "Ah, believe me, it is nothing," he said quietly, rolling a fresh cigarette as he leaned against the doorway. "Possibly I shall have to offer the chocolate or the wine to thees girls, or make to them a promenade in the moonlight on the verandah. It is ever so. Unless, my friend," he said, suddenly turning toward me in an excess of chivalrous self-abnegation, "unless you shall yourself take my place. Behold, I gif them to you! I vamos! I vanish! I make track! I skedaddle!" I think he would have carried his extravagance to the point of summoning his four gipsy witches of partners, and committing them to my care, if the crowd had not at that moment parted before the remaining dancers, and left one of the onlookers, a tall, slender girl, calmly surveying them through gold-rimmed eye-glasses in complete critical absorption. I stared in amazement and consternation; for I recognised

in the fair stranger Miss Urania Mannersley, the Congregational minister's niece!

Everybody knew Rainie Mannersley throughout the length and breadth of the Encinal. She was at once the envy and the goad of the daughters of those South-western and Eastern immigrants who had settled in the valley. She was correct, she was critical, she was faultless and observant. She was proper, yet independent: she was highly educated; she was suspected of knowing Latin and Greek; she even spelled correctly! She could wither the plainest field nosegay in the hands of other girls by giving the flowers their botanical names. She never said, "Ain't you?" but "Aren't you?" She looked upon "Did I which?" as an incomplete and imperfect form of "What did I do?" She quoted from Browning and Tennyson, and was believed to have read them. She was from Boston. What could she possibly be doing at a free-and-easy *sandango*?

Even if these facts were not already familiar to every one there, her outward appearance would have attracted attention. Contrasted with the gorgeous red, black, and yellow skirts of the dancers, her plain, tightly fitting gown and hat, all of one delicate grey, were sufficiently notable in themselves, even had they not seemed, like the girl herself, a kind of quiet protest to the glaring flounces before her. Her small, straight waist and flat back brought into greater relief the corsetless, waistless, swaying figures of the Mexican girls, and her long, slim, well-booted feet, peeping from the stiff, white edges of her short skirt, made their broad, low-quartered slippers, held on by the big toe, appear more preposterous than ever. Suddenly she seemed to realise that she was standing there alone, but without fear or embarrassment. She drew back a little, glancing carelessly behind her as if missing some previous companion, and then her eyes fell upon mine. She smiled an easy recogni-

tion, then, a moment later, her glance rested more curiously upon Enriquez, who was still by my side. I disengaged myself and instantly joined her, particularly as I noticed that a few of the other bystanders were beginning to stare at her with little reserve.

"Isn't it the most extraordinary thing you ever saw?" she said quietly. Then, presently noticing the look of embarrassment on my face, she went on, more by way of conversation than of explanation: "I just left uncle making a call on a parishioner next door, and was going home with Jocasta (a peon servant of her uncle's), when I heard the music, and dropped in. I don't know what has become of her," she added, glancing round the room again; "she seemed perfectly wild when she saw that creature over there bounding about with his handkerchiefs. You were speaking to him just now. Do tell me—is he real?"

"I should think there was little doubt of that," I said, with a vague laugh.

"You know what I mean," she said simply. "Is he quite sane? Does he do that because he likes it, or is he paid for it?"

This was too much. I pointed out somewhat hurriedly that he was a scion of one of the oldest Castilian families, that the performance was a national gipsy dance which he had joined in as a patriot and a patron, and that he was my dearest friend. At the same time I was conscious that I wished she hadn't seen his last performance.

"You don't mean to say that all that he did was in the dance?" she said. "I don't believe it. It was only like him." As I hesitated over this palpable truth, she went on: "I do wish he'd do it again. Don't you think you could make him?"

"Perhaps he might if *you* asked him," I said a little maliciously.

"Of course I shouldn't do that," she returned quietly. "All the same, I do believe he is really going to do it—or something else. Do look!"

I looked, and to my horror saw that Enriquez, possibly incited by the delicate gold eye-glasses of Miss Mannersley, had divested himself of his coat, and was winding the four handkerchiefs, tied together, picturesquely around his waist, preparatory to some new performance. I tried furtively to give him a warning look, but in vain.

"Isn't he really too absurd for anything?" said Miss Mannersley, yet with a certain comfortable anticipation in her voice. "You know, I never saw anything like this before. I wouldn't have believed such a creature could have existed."

Even had I succeeded in warning him, I doubt if it would have been of any avail. For, seizing a guitar from one of the musicians, he struck a few chords, and suddenly began to zigzag into the centre of the floor, swaying his body languishingly from side to side in time with the music and the pitch of a thin Spanish tenor. It was a gipsy love-song. Possibly Miss Mannersley's lingual accomplishments did not include a knowledge of Castilian, but she could not fail to see that the gestures and illustrative pantomime were addressed to her. Passionately assuring her that she was the most favoured daughter of the Virgin, that her eyes were like votive tapers, and yet in the same breath accusing her of being a "brigand" and "assassin" in her attitude toward "his heart," he balanced with quivering timidity toward her, threw an imaginary cloak in front of her neat boots as a carpet for her to tread on, and with a final astonishing pirouette and a languishing twang of his guitar, sank on one knee, and blew, with a rose, a kiss at her feet.

If I had been seriously angry with him before for his grotesque extravagance, I could have pitied him now for

the young girl's absolute unconsciousness of anything but his utter ludicrousness. The applause of dancers and bystanders was instantaneous and hearty; her only contribution to it was a slight parting of her thin red lips in a half-incredulous smile. In the silence that followed the applause, as Enriquez walked pantingly away, I heard her saying, half to herself, "Certainly a most extraordinary creature!" In my indignation I could not help turning suddenly upon her and looking straight into her eyes. They were brown, with that peculiar velvet opacity common to the pupils of near-sighted persons, and seemed to defy internal scrutiny. She only repeated carelessly, "Isn't he?" and added: "Please see if you can find Jocasta. I suppose we ought to be going now; and I dare say he won't be doing it again. Ah! there she is. Good gracious, child! what have you got there?"

It was Enriquez' rose, which Jocasta had picked up, and was timidly holding out toward her mistress.

"Heavens! I don't want it. Keep it yourself."

I walked with them to the door, as I did not fancy a certain glitter in the black eyes of the Señoritas Manuela and Pepita, who were watching her curiously. But I think she was as oblivious of this as she was of Enriquez' particular attentions. As we reached the street I felt that I ought to say something more.

"You know," I began casually, "that although those poor people meet here in this public way, their gathering is really quite a homely pastoral and a national custom; and these girls are all honest, hard-working peons or servants enjoying themselves in quite the old idyllic fashion."

"Certainly," said the young girl, half abstractedly. "Of course it's a Moorish dance, originally brought over, I suppose, by those old Andalusian immigrants two hundred years ago. It's quite Arabic in its suggestions. I have

got something like it in an old *cancionero* I picked up at a book-stall in Boston. But," she added, with a gasp of reminiscent satisfaction, "that's not like *him*! Oh no! *he* is decidedly original. Heavens! yes."

I turned away in some discomfiture to join Enriquez, who was calmly awaiting me, with a cigarette in his mouth, outside the sala. Yet he looked so unconscious of any previous absurdity that I hesitated in what I thought was a necessary warning. He, however, quickly precipitated it. Glancing after the retreating figures of the two women, he said, "Thees mees from Boston is return to her house. You do not accompany her? I shall. Behold me—I am there." But I linked my arm firmly in his. Then I pointed out, first, that she was already accompanied by a servant; secondly, that if I, who knew her, had hesitated to offer myself as an escort, it was hardly proper for him, a perfect stranger, to take that liberty; that Miss Mannersley was very punctilious of etiquette, which he, as a Castilian gentleman, ought to appreciate.

"But will she not regard lose—the admiration excessif?" he said, twirling his thin little moustache meditatively.

"No, she will not," I returned sharply; "and you ought to understand that she is on a different level from your *Manuelas* and *Carmens*."

"Pardon, my friend," he said gravely; "thees women are ever the same. There is a proverb in my language. Listen: 'Whether the sharp blade of the Toledo pierce the satin or the goat-skin, it shall find behind it ever the same heart to wound.' I am that Toledo blade—or possibly it is you, my friend. Wherefore, let us together pursue this girl of Boston on the instant."

But I kept my grasp on Enriquez' arm, and succeeded in restraining his mercurial impulses for the moment. He halted, and puffed vigorously at his cigarette; but the next

instant he started forward again. "Let us, however, follow with discretion in the rear: we shall pass *her* house; we shall gaze at it; it shall touch her heart."

Ridiculous as was this following of the young girl we had only just parted from, I nevertheless knew that Enriquez was quite capable of attempting it alone, and I thought it better to humour him by consenting to walk with him in that direction; but I felt it necessary to say—

"I ought to warn you that Miss Mannersley already looks upon your performances at the sala as something *outré* and peculiar, and if I were you I shouldn't do anything to deepen that impression."

"You are saying she *ees* shock?" said Enriquez gravely.

I felt I could not conscientiously say that she was shocked, and he saw my hesitation. "Then she have jealousy of the *Señoritas*," he suggested, with insufferable complacency. "You observe! I have already said. It is ever so."

I could stand it no longer. "Look here, Harry," I said, "if you must know it, she looks upon you as an acrobat—a paid performer."

"Ah!"—his black eyes sparkled—"the *torero*, the man who fight the bull, he is also an acrobat."

"Yes; but she thinks you a clown!—a *gracioso de teatro*,—there!"

"Then I have make her laugh?" he said coolly.

I don't think he had; but I shrugged my shoulders.

"*Bueno!*" he said cheerfully. "Lose, he begin with a laugh, he make feenish with a sigh."

I turned to look at him in the moonlight. His face presented its habitual Spanish gravity—a gravity that was almost ironical. His small black eyes had their characteristic irresponsible audacity—the irresponsibility of the vivacious young animal. It could not be possible that

he was really touched with the placid frigidities of Miss Mannersley. I remembered his equally elastic gallantries with Miss Pinky Smith, a blonde Western belle, from which both had harmlessly rebounded. As we walked on slowly I continued more persuasively: "Of course this is only your nonsense; but don't you see, Miss Mannersley thinks it all in earnest and really your nature?" I hesitated, for it suddenly struck me that it *was* really his nature. "And—hang it all!—you don't want her to believe you a common buffoon, or some intoxicated *muchacho*."

"Intoxicated?" repeated Enriquez, with exasperating languishment. "Yes; that is the word that shall express itself. My friend, you have made a shot in the centre—you have ring the bell every time! It is intoxication—but not of *aguardiente*. Look! I have long time an ancestor of whom is a pretty story. One day in church he have seen a young girl—a mere peasant girl—pass to the confessional. He look her in her eye, he stagger,"—here Enriquez wobbled pantomimically into the road,—"he fall!"—he would have suited the action to the word if I had not firmly held him up. "They have take him home, where he have remain without his clothes, and have dance and sing. But it was the drunkenness of *lofe*. And, look you, thees village girl was a nothing, not even pretty. The name of my ancestor was——"

"Don Quixote de la Mancha," I suggested maliciously. "I suspected as much. Come along. That will do."

"My ancestor's name," continued Enriquez gravely, "was Antonio Hermenegildo de Salvatierra, which is not the same. Thees Don Quixote of whom you speak exist not at all."

"Never mind. Only, for Heaven's sake, as we are nearing the house, don't make a fool of yourself again."

It was a wonderful moonlight night. The deep redwood

porch of the Mannersley parsonage, under the shadow of a great oak,—the largest in the Encinal,—was diapered in black and silver. As the women stepped upon the porch their shadows were silhouetted against the door. Miss Mannersley paused for an instant, and turned to give a last look at the beauty of the night as Jocasta entered. Her glance fell upon us as we passed. She nodded carelessly and unaffectedly to me, but as she recognised Enriquez she looked a little longer at him with her previous cold and invincible curiosity. To my horror Enriquez began instantly to affect a slight tremulousness of gait and a difficulty of breathing; but I gripped his arm savagely, and managed to get him past the house as the door closed finally on the young lady.

"You do not comprehend, friend Pancho," he said gravely, "but those eyes in their glass are as the *espejo uestorio*, the burning mirror. They burn, they consume me here like paper. Let us affix to ourselves thees tree. She will, without doubt, appear at her window. We shall salute her for good-night."

"We will do nothing of the kind," I said sharply. Finding that I was determined, he permitted me to lead him away. I was delighted to notice, however, that he had indicated the window which I knew was the minister's study, and that as the bedrooms were in the rear of the house, this later incident was probably not overseen by the young lady or the servant. But I did not part from Enriquez until I saw him safely back to the sala, where I left him sipping chocolate, his arm alternately around the waists of his two previous partners in a delightful Arcadian and childlike simplicity, and an apparent utter forgetfulness of Miss Mannersley.

The *sandangos* were usually held on Saturday night, and the next day, being Sunday, I missed Enriquez; but as he

was a devout Catholic I remembered that he was at mass in the morning, and possibly at the bull-fight at San Antonio in the afternoon. But I was somewhat surprised on the Monday morning following, as I was crossing the plaza, to have my arm taken by the Rev. Mr. Mannersley in the nearest approach to familiarity that was consistent with the reserve of this eminent divine. I looked at him inquiringly. Although scrupulously correct in attire, his features always had a singular resemblance to the national caricature known as "Uncle Sam," but with the humorous expression left out. Softly stroking his goatee with three fingers, he began condescendingly: "You are, I think, more or less familiar with the characteristics and customs of the Spanish as exhibited by the settlers here." A thrill of apprehension went through me. Had he heard of Enriquez's proceedings? Had Miss Mannersley cruelly betrayed him to her uncle? "I have not given that attention myself to their language and social peculiarities," he continued, with a large wave of the hand, "being much occupied with a study of their religious beliefs and superstitions" (it struck me that this was apt to be a common fault of people of the Mannersley type); "but I have refrained from a personal discussion of them; on the contrary, I have held somewhat broad views on the subject of their remarkable missionary work, and have suggested a scheme of co-operation with them, quite independent of doctrinal teaching, to my brethren of other Protestant Christian sects. These views I first incorporated in a sermon last Sunday week, which I am told has created considerable attention." He stopped and coughed slightly. "I have not yet heard from any of the Roman clergy, but I am led to believe that my remarks were not ungrateful to Catholics generally."

I was relieved, although still in some wonder why he

should address me on this topic. I had a vague remembrance of having heard that he had said something on Sunday which had offended some Puritans of his flock, but nothing more. He continued: "I have just said that I was unacquainted with the characteristics of the Spanish-American race. I presume, however, they have the impulsiveness of their Latin origin. They gesticulate—eh? They express their gratitude, their joy, their affection, their emotions generally, by spasmodic movements? They naturally dance—sing—eh?" A horrible suspicion crossed my mind; I could only stare helplessly at him. "I see," he said graciously; "perhaps it is a somewhat general question. I will explain myself. A rather singular occurrence happened to me the other night. I had returned from visiting a parishioner, and was alone in my study, reviewing my sermon for the next day. It must have been quite late before I concluded, for I distinctly remember my niece had returned with her servant fully an hour before. Presently I heard the sounds of a musical instrument in the road, with the accents of some one singing or rehearsing some metrical composition in words that, although couched in a language foreign to me, in expression and modulation gave me the impression of being distinctly adulatory. For some little time, in the greater preoccupation of my task, I paid little attention to the performance; but its persistency at length drew me in no mere idle curiosity to the window. From there, standing in my dressing-gown, and believing myself unperceived, I noticed under the large oak in the roadside the figure of a young man, who, by the imperfect light, appeared to be of Spanish extraction. But I evidently miscalculated my own invisibility; for he moved rapidly forward as I came to the window, and in a series of the most extraordinary pantomimic gestures saluted me. Beyond my experience of a few Greek plays in earlier days,

I confess I am not an adept in the understanding of gesticulation ; but it struck me that the various phases of gratitude, fervour, reverence, and exaltation were successively portrayed. He placed his hand upon his head, his heart, and even clasped them together in this manner." To my consternation the reverend gentleman here imitated Enriquez' most extravagant pantomime. "I am willing to confess," he continued, "that I was singularly moved by them, as well as by the highly creditable and Christian interest that evidently produced them. At last I opened the window. Leaning out, I told him that I regretted that the lateness of the hour prevented any further response from me than a grateful though hurried acknowledgment of his praiseworthy emotion, but that I should be glad to see him for a few moments in the vestry before service the next day, or at early candle-light, before the meeting of the Bible-class. I told him that as my sole purpose had been the creation of an evangelical brotherhood and the exclusion of merely doctrinal views, nothing could be more gratifying to me than his spontaneous and unsolicited testimony to my motives. He appeared for an instant to be deeply affected, and, indeed, quite overcome with emotion, and then gracefully retired, with some agility and a slight saltatory movement."

He paused. A sudden and overwhelming idea took possession of me, and I looked impulsively into his face. Was it possible that for once Enriquez' ironical extravagance had been understood, met, and vanquished by a master hand? But the Rev. Mr. Mannersley's self-satisfied face betrayed no ambiguity or lurking humour. He was evidently in earnest: he had complacently accepted for himself the abandoned Enriquez' serenade to his niece. I felt an hysterical desire to laugh, but it was checked by my companion's next words.

"I informed my niece of the occurrence in the morning at breakfast. She had not heard anything of the strange performance, but she agreed with me as to its undoubted origin in a grateful recognition of my liberal efforts toward his co-religionists. It was she, in fact, who suggested that your knowledge of these people might corroborate my impressions."

I was dumbfounded. Had Miss Mannersley, who must have recognised Enriquez' hand in this, concealed the fact in a desire to shield him? But this was so inconsistent with her utter indifference to him, except as a grotesque study, that she would have been more likely to tell her uncle all about his previous performance. Nor could it be that she wished to conceal her visit to the fandango. She was far too independent for that, and it was even possible that the reverend gentleman, in his desire to know more of Enriquez' compatriots, would not have objected. In my confusion I meekly added my conviction to hers, congratulated him upon his evident success, and slipped away. But I was burning with a desire to see Enriquez and know all. He was imaginative, but not untruthful. Unfortunately, I learned that he was just then following one of his erratic impulses, and had gone to a *rodeo* at his cousin's, in the foothills, where he was alternately exercising his horsemanship in catching and breaking wild cattle, and delighting his relatives with his incomparable grasp of the American language and customs, and of the airs of a young man of fashion. Then my thoughts recurred to Miss Mannersley. Had she really been oblivious that night to Enriquez' serenade? I resolved to find out, if I could, without betraying Enriquez. Indeed, it was possible, after all, that it might not have been he.

Chance favoured me. The next evening I was at a party where Miss Mannersley, by reason of her position and

quality, was a distinguished—I had almost written a popular—guest. But, as I have formerly stated, although the youthful fair of the Encinal were flattered by her casual attentions, and secretly admired her superior style and aristocratic calm, they were more or less uneasy under the dominance of her intelligence and education, and were afraid to attempt either confidence or familiarity. They were also singularly jealous of her, for although the average young man was equally afraid of her cleverness and candour, he was not above paying a tremulous and timid court to her for its effect upon her humbler sisters. This evening she was surrounded by her usual satellites, including, of course, the local notables and special guests of distinction. She had been discussing, I think, the existence of glaciers on Mount Shasta with a spectacled geologist, and had participated with charming frankness in a conversation on anatomy with the local doctor and a learned professor, when she was asked to take a seat at the piano. She played with remarkable skill and wonderful precision, but coldly and brilliantly. As she sat there in her subdued but perfectly fitting evening dress, her regular profile and short but slender neck firmly set upon her high shoulders, exhaling an atmosphere of refined Puritanism and provocative intelligence, the utter incongruity of Enriquez' extravagant attentions if ironical, and their equal hopelessness if not, seemed to me plainer than ever. What had this well-poised, coldly observant spinster to do with that quaintly ironic ruffler, that romantic cynic, that rowdy Don Quixote, that impossible Enriquez? Presently she ceased playing. Her slim, narrow slipper, revealing her thin ankle, remained upon the pedal; her delicate fingers were resting idly on the keys; her head was slightly thrown back, and her narrow eyebrows prettily knit toward the ceiling in an effort of memory.

"Something of Chopin's," suggested the geologist ardently.

"That exquisite sonata!" pleaded the doctor.

"Suthin' of Rubinstein. Heard him once," said a gentleman of Siskiyou. "He just made that pianner get up and howl. Play Rube."

She shook her head with parted lips and a slight touch of girlish coquetry in her manner. Then her fingers suddenly dropped upon the keys with a glassy tinkle; there were a few quick pizzicato chords, down went the low pedal with a monotonous strumming, and she presently began to hum to herself. I started,—as well I might,—for I recognised one of Enriquez' favourite and most extravagant guitar solos. It was audacious; it was barbaric; it was, I fear, vulgar. As I remembered it,—as he sang it,—it recounted the adventures of one Don Francisco, a provincial gallant and roisterer of the most objectionable type. It had one hundred and four verses, which Enriquez never spared me. I shuddered as in a pleasant quiet voice the correct Miss Mannersley warbled in musical praise of the *pellejo*, or wine-skin, and a eulogy of the dice-box came caressingly from her thin red lips. But the company was far differently affected: the strange, wild air and wilder accompaniment were evidently catching; people moved towards the piano; somebody whistled the air from a distant corner; even the faces of the geologist and doctor brightened.

"A tarantella, I presume?" blandly suggested the doctor.

Miss Mannersley stopped, and rose carelessly from the piano. "It is a Moorish gipsy song of the fifteenth century," she said dryly.

"It seemed sorter familiar, too," hesitated one of the young men timidly, "like as if—don't you know?—you had without knowing it, don't you know?"—he blushed slightly—"sorter picked it up somewhere."

"I 'picked it up,' as you call it, in the collection of mediæval manuscripts of the Harvard Library, and copied it," returned Miss Mannersley coldly, as she turned away.

But I was not inclined to let her off so easily. I presently made my way to her side. "Your uncle was complimentary enough to consult me as to the meaning of the appearance of a certain exuberant Spanish visitor at his house the other night." I looked into her brown eyes, but my own slipped off her velvety pupils without retaining anything. Then she reinforced her gaze with a pince-nez, and said carelessly—

"Oh, it's you! How are you? Well, could you give him any information?"

"Only generally," I returned, still looking into her eyes. "These people are impulsive. The Spanish blood is a mixture of gold and quicksilver."

She smiled slightly. "That reminds me of your volatile friend. He was mercurial enough, certainly. Is he still dancing?"

"And singing sometimes," I responded pointedly. But she only added casually, "A singular creature," without exhibiting the least consciousness, and drifted away, leaving me none the wiser. I felt that Enriquez alone could enlighten me. I must see him.

I did, but not in the way I expected. There was a bull-fight at San Antonio the next Saturday afternoon, the usual Sunday performance being changed in deference to the Sabbatical habits of the Americans. An additional attraction was offered in the shape of a bull and bear fight, also a concession to American taste, which had voted the bull fight "slow," and had averred that the bull "did not get a fair show." I am glad that I am able to spare the reader the usual realistic horrors, for in the Californian performances there was very little of the brutality that dis-

tinguished this function in the mother-country. The horses were not miserable, worn-out hacks, but young and alert mustangs ; and the display of horsemanship by the picadors was not only wonderful, but secured an almost absolute safety to horse and rider. I never saw a horse gored ; although unskilful riders were sometimes thrown in wheeling quickly to avoid the bull's charge, they generally regained their animals without injury.

The Plaza de Toros was reached through the decayed and tile-strewn outskirts of an old Spanish village. It was a rudely built, oval amphitheatre, with crumbling, white-washed adobe walls, and roofed only over portions of the gallery reserved for the provincial "notables," but now occupied by a few shopkeepers and their wives, with a sprinkling of American travellers and ranchmen. The impalpable adobe-dust of the arena was being whirled into the air by the strong onset of the afternoon trade-winds, which happily, however, helped also to dissipate a reek of garlic, and the acrid fumes of cheap tobacco rolled in corn-husk cigarettes. I was leaning over the second barrier, waiting for the meagre and circus-like procession to enter with the keys of the bull-pen, when my attention was attracted to a movement in the reserved gallery. A lady and gentleman of a quality that was evidently unfamiliar to the rest of the audience were picking their way along the rickety benches to a front seat. I recognised the geologist with some surprise, and the lady he was leading with still greater astonishment. For it was Miss Mannersley, in her precise, well-fitting walking costume—a monotone of sober colour among the party-coloured audience.

However, I was perhaps less surprised than the audience, for I was not only becoming as accustomed to the young girl's vagaries as I had been to Enriquez' extravagance ; but I was also satisfied that her uncle might have given her permission

to come, as a recognition of the Sunday concession of the management, as well as to conciliate his supposed Catholic friends. I watched her sitting there until the first bull had entered, and, after a rather brief play with the picadors and banderilleros, was despatched. At the moment when the matador approached the bull with his lethal weapon I was not sorry for an excuse to glance at Miss Mannersley. Her hands were in her lap, her head slightly bent forward over her knees. I fancied that she, too, had dropped her eyes before the brutal situation; to my horror I saw that she had a drawing-book in her hand, and was actually sketching it. I turned my eyes in preference to the dying bull.

The second animal led out for this ingenuous slaughter was, however, more sullen, uncertain, and discomposing to his butchers. He accepted the irony of a trial with gloomy, suspicious eyes, and he declined the challenge of whirling and insulting picadors. He bristled with banderillas like a hedgehog, but remained with his haunches backed against the barrier, at times almost hidden in the fine dust raised by the monotonous stroke of his sullenly pawing hoof—his one dull, heavy protest. A vague uneasiness had infected his adversaries; the picadors held aloof, the banderilleros skirmished at a safe distance. The audience resented only the indecision of the bull. Galling epithets were flung at him, followed by cries of "Espada!" and, curving his elbow under his short cloak, the matador, with his flashing blade in hand, advanced and—stopped. The bull remained motionless.

For at that moment a heavier gust of wind than usual swept down upon the arena, lifted a suffocating cloud of dust, and whirled it around the tiers of benches and balcony, and for a moment seemed to stop the performance. I heard an exclamation from the geologist, who had risen to his feet. I fancied I heard even a faint cry from Miss

Mannersley; but the next moment as the dust was slowly settling, we saw a sheet of paper in the air, that had been caught up in this brief cyclone, dropping, dipping from side to side on uncertain wings, until it slowly descended in the very middle of the arena. It was a leaf from Miss Mannersley's sketch-book, the one on which she had been sketching.

In the pause that followed it seemed to be the one object that at last excited the bull's growing but tardy ire. He glanced at it with murky, distended eyes; he snorted at it with vague yet troubled fury. Whether he detected his own presentment in Miss Mannersley's sketch, or whether he recognised it as an unknown and unfamiliar treachery in his surroundings, I could not conjecture: for the next moment the matador, taking advantage of the bull's concentration, with a complacent leer at the audience, advanced toward the paper. But at that instant a young man cleared the barrier into the arena with a single bound, shoved the matador to one side, caught up the paper, turned toward the balcony and Miss Mannersley, with a gesture of apology, dropped gaily before the bull, knelt down before him with an exaggerated humility, and held up the drawing as if for his inspection. A roar of applause broke from the audience, a cry of warning and exasperation from the attendants, as the goaded bull suddenly charged the stranger. But he sprang to one side with great dexterity, made a courteous gesture to the matador as if passing the bull over to him, and, still holding the paper in his hand, releaped the barrier, and rejoined the audience in safety. I did not wait to see the deadly, dominant thrust with which the matador received the charging bull; my eyes were following the figure now bounding up the steps to the balcony, where with an exaggerated salutation he laid the drawing in Miss Mannersley's lap and vanished. There was no mistaking

that thin, lithe form, the narrow black moustache, and gravely dancing eyes. The audacity of conception, the extravagance of execution, the quaint irony of the sequel, could belong to no one but Enriquez.

I hurried up to her as the six yoked mules dragged the carcass of the bull away. She was placidly putting up her book, the unmoved focus of a hundred eager and curious eyes. She smiled slightly as she saw me. "I was just telling Mr. Briggs what an extraordinary creature it was, and how you knew him. He must have had great experience to do that sort of thing so cleverly and safely. Does he do it often? Of course, not just that. But does he pick up cigars and things that I see they throw to the matador? Does he belong to the management? Mr. Briggs thinks the whole thing was a feint to distract the bull," she added, with a wicked glance at the geologist, who, I fancied, looked disturbed.

"I am afraid," I said dryly, "that his act was as unpremeditated and genuine as it was unusual."

"Why afraid?"

It was a matter-of-fact question, but I instantly saw my mistake. What right had I to assume that Enriquez' attentions were any more genuine than her own easy indifference; and if I suspected that they were, was it fair in me to give my friend away to this heartless coquette? "You are not very gallant," she said, with a slight laugh, as I was hesitating, and turned away with her escort before I could frame a reply. But at least Enriquez was now accessible, and I should gain some information from him. I knew where to find him, unless he were still lounging about the building, intent upon more extravagance; but I waited until I saw Miss Mannersley and Briggs depart without further interruption.

The hacienda of Ramon Saltillo, Enriquez' cousin, was on the outskirts of the village. When I arrived there I

found Enriquez' pinto mustang steaming in the corral, and, although I was momentarily delayed by the servants at the gateway, I was surprised to find Enriquez himself lying languidly on his back in a hammock in the patio. His arms were hanging down listlessly on each side as if in the greatest prostration, yet I could not resist the impression that the rascal had only just got into the hammock when he heard of my arrival.

"You have arrived, friend Pancho, in time," he said in accents of exaggerated weakness. "I am absolutely exhaust. I am bursted, caved in, kerflummoxed. I have behold you, my friend, at the barrier. I speak not, I make no sign at the first, because I was on fire; I speak not at the scenish—for I am exhaust."

"I see; the bull made it lively for you."

He instantly bounded up in the hammock. "The bull! Caramba! Not a thousand bulls! And thees one, look you, was a craven. I snap my fingers over his horn; I roll my cigarette under his nose."

"Well, then—what was it?"

He instantly lay down again, pulling up the sides of the hammock. Presently his voice came from its depths, appealing in hollow tones to the sky. "He asks me— thees friend of my soul, thees brother of my life, thees Pancho that I lose—what it was? He would that I should tell him why I am game in the legs, why I shake in the hand, crack in the voice, and am generally wipe out! And yet he, my pardner—thees Francisco—know that I have seen the mees from Boston! That I have gaze into the eye, touch the hand, and for the instant possess the picture that hand have drawn! It was a sublime picture, Pancho," he said, sitting up again suddenly, "and have kill the bull before our friend Pepe's sword have touch even the bone of hees back and make finish of him."

"Look here, Enriquez," I said bluntly, "have you been serenading that girl?"

He shrugged his shoulders without the least embarrassment, and said: "Ah, yes. What would you? It is of a necessity."

"Well," I retorted, "then you ought to know that her uncle took it all to himself—thought you some grateful Catholic pleased with his religious tolerance."

He did not even smile. "*Bueno*," he said gravely. "That make something, too. In thees affair it is well to begin with the duenna. He is the duenna."

"And," I went on relentlessly, "her escort told her just now that your exploit in the bull-ring was only a trick to divert the bull, suggested by the management."

"Bah! her escort is a geologist. Naturally, she is to him as a stone."

I would have continued, but a peon interrupted us at this moment with a sign to Enriquez, who leaped briskly from the hammock, bidding me wait his return from a messenger in the gateway.

Still unsatisfied of mind I waited, and sat down in the hammock that Enriquez had quitted. A scrap of paper was lying in its meshes, which at first appeared to be of the kind from which Enriquez rolled his cigarettes; but as I picked it up to throw it away, I found it was of much firmer and stouter material. Looking at it more closely, I was surprised to recognise it as a piece of the tinted drawing-paper torn off the "block" that Miss Mannersley had used. It had been deeply creased at right angles as if it had been folded; it looked as if it might have been the outer half of a sheet used for a note.

It might have been a trifling circumstance, but it greatly excited my curiosity. I knew that he had returned the sketch to Miss Mannersley, for I had seen it in her hand.

Had she given him another? And if so, why had it been folded to the destruction of the drawing? Or was it part of a note which he had destroyed? In the first impulse of discovery I walked quickly with it toward the gateway where Enriquez had disappeared, intending to restore it to him. He was just outside talking with a young girl. I started, for it was Jocasta—Miss Mannersley's maid.

With this added discovery came that sense of uneasiness and indignation with which we illogically are apt to resent the withholding of a friend's confidence, even in matters concerning only himself. It was no use for me to reason that it was no business of mine, that he was right in keeping a secret that concerned another—and a lady; but I was afraid I was even more meanly resentful because the discovery quite upset my theory of his conduct and of Miss Mannersley's attitude toward him. I continued to walk on to the gateway, where I bade Enriquez a hurried good-bye, alleging the sudden remembrance of another engagement, but without appearing to recognise the girl, who was moving away, when, to my further discomfiture, the rascal stopped me with an appealing wink, threw his arms around my neck, whispered hoarsely in my ear, "Ah! you see—you comprehend—but you are the mirror of discretion!" and returned to Jocasta. But whether this meant that he had received a message from Miss Mannersley, or that he was trying to suborn her maid to carry one, was still uncertain. He was capable of either.

During the next two or three weeks I saw him frequently; but as I had resolved to try the effect of ignoring Miss Mannersley in our conversation, I gathered little further of their relations, and, to my surprise, after one or two characteristic extravagances of allusion, Enriquez dropped the subject too. Only one afternoon, as we were parting, he said carelessly: "My friend, you are going to the casa of

Mannersley to-night. I too have the honour of the invitation. But you will be my Mercury—my Leporello—you will take of me a message to thees Mees Boston, that I am crushed, desolated, prostrate, and flabbergasted—that I cannot arrive, for I have of that night to sit up with the grandaunt of my brother-in-law, who has a quinsy to the death. It is sad."

This was the first indication I had received of Miss Mannersley's advances. I was equally surprised at Enriquez' refusal.

"Nonsense!" I said bluntly. "Nothing keeps you from going."

"My friend," returned Enriquez, with a sudden lapse into languishment that seemed to make him absolutely infirm; "it is everything that shall restrain me. I am not strong. I shall become weak of the knee and tremble under the eye of Mees Boston. I shall precipitate myself to the geologist by the throat. Ask me another conundrum that shall be easy."

He seemed idiotically inflexible, and did not go. But I did. I found Miss Mannersley exquisitely dressed and looking singularly animated and pretty. The lambent glow of her inscrutable eye as she turned towards me might have been flattering but for my uneasiness in regard to Enriquez. I delivered his excuses as naturally as I could. She stiffened for an instant, and seemed an inch higher. "I am so sorry," she said at last in a level voice. "I thought he would have been so amusing. Indeed, I had hoped we might try an old Moorish dance together which I have found and was practising."

"He would have been delighted, I know. It's a great pity he didn't come with me," I said quickly; "but," I could not help adding, with emphasis on her own words, "he is such an 'extraordinary creature,' you know."

"I see nothing extraordinary in his devotion to an aged relative," returned Miss Mannersley quietly, as she turned away, "except that it justifies my respect for his character."

I do not know why I did not relate this to him. Possibly I had given up trying to understand them; perhaps I was beginning to have an idea that he could take care of himself. But I was somewhat surprised a few days later when, after asking me to go with him to a rodeo at his uncle's, he added composedly, "You will meet Mees Boston."

I stared, and but for his manner would have thought it part of his extravagance. For the rodeo—a yearly chase of wild cattle for the purpose of lassoing and branding them—was a rather brutal affair, and purely a man's function; it was also a family affair—a property stock-taking of the great Spanish cattle-owners—and strangers, particularly Americans, found it difficult to gain access to its mysteries and the *festa* that followed.

"But how did she get an invitation?" I asked. "You did not dare to ask—" I began.

"My friend," said Enriquez, with a singular deliberation, "the great and respectable Boston herself, and her serene, venerable oncle, and other Boston *magnificos*, have of a truth done me the inexpressible honour to solicit of my degraded, papistical oncle that she shall come—that she shall of her own superior eye behold the barbaric customs of our race."

His tone and manner were so peculiar that I stepped quickly before him, laid my hands on his shoulders, and looked down into his face. But the actual devil which I now for the first time saw in his eyes went out of them suddenly, and he relapsed again in affected languishment in his chair. "I shall be there, friend Pancho," he said, with a preposterous gasp. "I shall nerve my arm to lasso the bull, and tumble him before her at her feet. I shall

throw the "buck-jump" mustang at the same sacred spot. I shall pluck for her the buried chicken at full speed from the ground, and present it to her. You shall see it, friend Pancho. I shall be there."

He was as good as his word. When Don Pedro Amador, his uncle, installed Miss Mannersley, with Spanish courtesy, on a raised platform in the long valley where the rodeo took place, the gallant Enriquez selected a bull from the frightened and galloping herd, and, cleverly isolating him from the band, lassoed his hind legs, and threw him exactly before the platform where Miss Mannersley was seated. It was Enriquez who caught the unbroken mustang, sprang from his own saddle to the bare back of his captive, and with only the lasso for a bridle, halted him on rigid haunches at Miss Mannersley's feet. It was Enriquez who, in the sports that followed, leaned from his saddle at full speed, caught up the chicken buried to its head in the sand without wringing its neck, and tossed it unharmed and fluttering toward his mistress. As for her, she wore the same look of animation that I had seen in her face at our previous meeting. Although she did not bring her sketch-book with her, as at the bull-fight, she did not shrink from the branding of the cattle, which took place under her very eyes.

Yet I had never seen her and Enriquez together; they had never, to my actual knowledge, even exchanged words. And now, although she was the guest of his uncle, his duties seemed to keep him in the field, and apart from her. Nor, as far as I could detect, did either apparently make any effort to have it otherwise. The peculiar circumstance seemed to attract no attention from any one else. But for what I alone knew—or thought I knew—of their actual relations, I should have thought them strangers.

But I felt certain that the *fiesta* which took place in the

broad patio of Don Pedro's casa would bring them together. And later in the evening, as we were all sitting on the verandah watching the dancing of the Mexican women, whose white-flounced *sayas* were monotonously rising and falling to the strains of two melancholy harps, Miss Mannersley rejoined us from the house. She seemed to be utterly absorbed and abstracted in the barbaric dances, and scarcely moved as she leaned over the railing with her cheek resting on her hand. Suddenly she arose with a little cry.

"What is it?" asked two or three.

"Nothing—only I have lost my fan." She had risen, and was looking abstractedly on the floor.

Half-a-dozen men jumped to their feet. "Let me fetch it," they said.

"No, thank you. I think I know where it is, and will go for it myself." She was moving away.

But Don Pedro interposed with Spanish gravity. Such a thing was not to be heard of in his casa. If the señorita would not permit *him*—an old man—to go for it, it must be brought by Enriquez, her cavalier of the day.

But Enriquez was not to be found. I glanced at Miss Mannersley's somewhat disturbed face, and begged her to let me fetch it. I thought I saw a flush of relief come into her pale cheek as she said, in a lower voice, "On the stone seat in the garden."

I hurried away, leaving Don Pedro still protesting. I knew the gardens, and the stone seat at an angle of the wall, not a dozen yards from the casa. The moon shone full upon it. There, indeed, lay the little grey-feathered fan. But close beside it, also, lay the crumpled, black, gold-embroidered riding gauntlet that Enriquez had worn at the rodeo.

I thrust it hurriedly into my pocket, and ran back. As

I passed through the gateway I asked a peon to send Enriquez to me. The man stared. Did I not know that Don Enriquez had ridden away two minutes ago?

When I reached the verandah, I handed the fan to Miss Mannersley without a word. "Bueno," said Don Pedro gravely; "it is as well. There shall be no bones broken over the getting of it, for Enriquez, I hear, has had to return to the Encinal this very evening."

Miss Mannersley retired early. I did not inform her of my discovery, nor did I seek in any way to penetrate her secret. There was no doubt that she and Enriquez had been together, perhaps not for the first time; but what was the result of their interview? From the young girl's demeanour and Enriquez' hurried departure, I could only fear the worst for him. Had he been tempted into some further extravagance and been angrily rebuked, or had he avowed a real passion concealed under his exaggerated mask and been deliberately rejected? I tossed uneasily half the night, following in my dreams my poor friend's hurrying hoof-beats, and ever starting from my sleep at what I thought was the sound of galloping hoofs.

I rose early, and lounged into the patio; but others were there before me, and a small group of Don Pedro's family were excitedly discussing something, and I fancied they turned away awkwardly and consciously as I approached. There was an air of indefinite uneasiness everywhere. A strange fear came over me with the chill of the early morning air. Had anything happened to Enriquez? I had always looked upon his extravagance as part of his playful humour. Could it be possible that under the sting of rejection he had made his grotesque threat of languishing effacement real? Surely Miss Mannersley would know or suspect something, if it were the case.

I approached one of the Mexican women and asked if

the señorita had risen. The woman started, and looked covertly round before she replied. Did not Don Pancho know that Miss Mannersley and her maid had not slept in their beds that night, but had gone, none knew where?

For an instant I felt an appalling sense of my own responsibility in this suddenly serious situation, and hurried after the retreating family group. But as I entered the corridor a vaquero touched me on the shoulder. He had evidently just dismounted, and was covered with the dust of the road. He handed me a note written in pencil on a leaf from Miss Mannersley's sketch-book. It was in Enriques' hand, and his signature was followed by his most extravagant rubric.

"Friend Pancho: When you read this line you shall of a possibility think I am no more. That is where you shall slip up, my little brother! I am much more—I am two times as much, for I have marry Miss Boston. At the Mission Church, at five of the morning, sharp! No cards shall be left! I kiss the hand of my venerable uncle-in-law. You shall say to him that we fly to the South wilderness as the combined evangelical missionary to the heathen! Miss Boston herself say this. Ta-ta! How are you now? Your own ENRIQUEZ."

A Millionaire of Rough-and-Ready.

PROLOGUE.

THERE was no mistake this time : he had struck gold at last ! It had lain there before him a moment ago—a misshapen piece of brown-stained quartz, interspersed with dull yellow metal, yielding enough to have allowed the point of his pick to penetrate its honeycombed recesses, yet heavy enough to drop from the point of his pick as he endeavoured to lift it from the red earth.

He was seeing all this plainly, although he found himself, he knew not why, at some distance from the scene of his discovery, his heart foolishly beating, his breath impotently hurried. Yet he was walking slowly and vaguely, conscious of stopping and staring at the landscape, which no longer looked familiar to him. He was hoping for some instinct or force of habit to recall him to himself, yet when he saw a neighbour at work in an adjacent claim, he hesitated, and then turned his back upon him. Yet only a moment before he had thought of running to him, saying, "By Jingo ! I've struck it !" or, "D——n it, old man, I've got it !" But that moment had passed, and now it seemed to him that he could scarce raise his voice, or, if he did, the ejaculation would appear forced and artificial. Neither could he go over to him coolly and tell his good fortune ; and, partly from this strange shyness, and partly with a hope that another survey of the treasure might restore him to natural expression, he walked back to his tunnel.

Yes, it was there! No mere "pocket" or "deposit," but a part of the actual vein he had been so long seeking. It was there, sure enough, lying beside the pick and the débris of the "face" of the vein that he had exposed sufficiently, after the first shock of discovery, to assure himself of the fact and the permanence of his fortune. It was there, and with it the refutation of his enemies' sneers, the corroboration of his friends' belief, the practical demonstration of his own theories, the reward of his patient labours. It was there, sure enough. But, somehow, he not only failed to recall the first joy of discovery, but was conscious of a vague sense of responsibility and unrest. It was, no doubt, an enormous fortune to a man in his circumstances; perhaps it meant a couple of hundred thousand dollars or more, judging from the value of the old Martin lead, which was not as rich as this; but it required to be worked cautiously and judiciously. It was with a decided sense of uneasiness that he again sought the open sunlight of the hillside. His neighbour was still visible on the adjacent claim; but he had apparently stopped working, and was contemplatively smoking a pipe under a large pine-tree. For an instant he envied him his apparent contentment. He had a sudden fierce and inexplicable desire to go over to him and exasperate his easy poverty by a revelation of his own difficult treasure. But even that sensation quickly passed, and left him staring blankly at the landscape again.

As soon as he had made his discovery known, and settled its value, he would send for his wife and children from the States. He would build a fine house on the opposite hill-side, if she would consent to it, unless she preferred, for the children's sake, to live in San Francisco. A sense of a loss of independence, of a change of circumstances that left him no longer his own master, began to perplex him in the midst of his brightest projects. Certain other relations

with other members of his family, which had lapsed by absence and his insignificance, must now be taken up anew. He must do something for his sister Jane, for his brother William, for his wife's poor connections. It would be unfair to him to say that he contemplated those things with any other instinct than that of generosity ; yet he was conscious of being already perplexed and puzzled.

Meantime, however, the neighbour had apparently finished his pipe, and, knocking the ashes out of it, rose suddenly, and ended any further uncertainty of their meeting by walking over directly towards him. The treasure-finder advanced a few steps on his side, and then stopped irresolutely.

“ Hallo, Slinn ! ” said the neighbour confidently.

“ Hallo, Masters,” responded Slinn faintly.

From the sound of the two voices a stranger might have mistaken their relative condition.

“ What in thunder are you mooning about for ? ” asked Masters. “ What's up ? ” Then catching sight of Slinn's pale and anxious face, he added abruptly : “ Are you sick ? ”

Slinn was on the point of telling him his good fortune, but stopped. The unlucky question confirmed his consciousness of his own physical and mental disturbance, and he dreaded the ready ridicule of his companion. He would tell him later ; Masters need not know *when* he had made the strike. Besides, in his present vagueness he shrank from the brusque, practical questioning that would be sure to follow the revelation to a man of Masters' temperament.

“ I'm a little giddy here,” he answered, putting his hand to his head, “ and I thought I'd knock off until I was better.”

Masters examined him with two very critical grey eyes.

“ Tell ye what, old man : if you don't quit this dog-goned foolin' of yours in that God-forsaken tunnel you'll

get looney! Times you get so tangled up in follerin' that blind lead o' yours you ain't sensible."

Here was the opportunity to tell him all, and vindicate the justice of his theories! But he shrank from it again; and now, adding to the confusion, was a singular sense of dread at the mental labour of explanation. He only smiled painfully, and began to move away.

"Look yer!" said Masters peremptorily, "ye want about three fingers of straight whisky to set you right, and you've got to take it with me. D——n it, man, it may be the last drink we take together! Don't look so skeered! I mean, I made up my mind about ten minutes ago to cut the whole d——d thing, and light out for fresh diggings. I'm sick of getting only grub wages out o' this hill. So that's what I mean by saying it's the last drink you and me'll take together. You know my ways: sayin' and doin' with me's the same thing."

It was true. Slinn had often envied Masters' promptness of decision and resolution. But he only looked at the grim face of his interlocutor with a feeble sense of relief. He was *going!* And he, Slinn, would not have to explain anything!

He murmured something about having to go over to the settlement on business. He dreaded lest Masters should insist upon going into the tunnel.

"I suppose you want to mail that letter," said Masters dryly. "The mail don't go till to-morrow, so you've got time to finish it, and put it in an envelope."

Following the direction of Masters' eyes, Slinn looked down and saw, to his utter surprise, that he was holding an unfinished pencilled note in his hand. How it came there, when he had written it, he could not tell; he dimly remembered that one of his first impulses was to write to his wife; but that he had already done so, he had forgotten.

He hastily concealed the note in his breast-pocket, with a vacant smile. Masters eyed him half contemptuously, half compassionately.

"Don't forget yourself and drop it in some hollow tree for a letter-box," he said. "Well, so long!—since you won't drink. Take care of yourself," and, turning on his heel, Masters walked away.

Slinn watched him as he crossed over to his abandoned claim, saw him gather his few mining utensils, strap his blanket over his back, lift his hat on his long-handled shovel as a token of farewell, and then stride light-heartedly over the ridge.

He was alone now with his secret and his treasure. The only man in the world who knew of the exact position of his tunnel had gone away for ever. It was not likely that this chance companion of a few weeks would ever remember him or the locality again; he could now leave his treasure alone—for even a day perhaps—until he had thought out some plan and sought out some friend in whom to confide. His secluded life, the singular habits of concentration which had at last proved so successful, had, at the same time, left him few acquaintances and no associates. And into all his well-laid plans and patiently-digested theories for finding the treasure, the means and methods of working it and disposing of it had never entered.

And now, at the hour when he most needed his faculties, what was the meaning of this strange benumbing of them?

Patience! He only wanted a little rest—a little time to recover himself. There was a large boulder under a tree in the highway to the settlement—a sheltered spot where he had often waited for the coming of the stage-coach. He would go there, and when he was sufficiently rested and composed, he would go on.

Nevertheless, on his way he diverged and turned into

the woods for no other apparent purpose than to find a hollow tree. "A hollow tree." Yes; that was what Masters had said; he remembered it distinctly; and something was to be done there; but what it was, or why it should be done, he could not tell. However, it was done, and very luckily, for his limbs could scarcely support him further, and reaching a boulder, he dropped upon it like another stone.

And now, strange to say, the uneasiness and perplexity which had possessed him ever since he had stood before his revealed wealth, dropped from him like a burden laid upon the wayside. A measureless peace stole over him, in which visions of his new-found fortune, no longer a trouble and perplexity, but crowned with happiness and blessing to all around him, assumed proportions far beyond his own weak, selfish plans. In its even-handed benefaction, his wife and children, his friends and relations, even his late poor companion of the hillside, met and moved harmoniously together; in its far-reaching consequences there was only the influence of good. It was not strange that this poor finite mind should never have conceived the meaning of the wealth extended to him; or that, conceiving it, he should faint and falter under the revelation. Enough that for a few minutes he must have tasted a joy of perfect anticipation that years of actual possession might never bring.

The sun seemed to go down in a rosy dream of his own happiness, as he still sat there. Later, the shadows of the trees thickened and surrounded him, and still later fell the calm of a quiet evening sky with far-spaced passionless stars, that seemed as little troubled by what they looked upon as he was by the stealthy creeping life in the grasses and underbrush at his feet. The dull patter of soft little feet in the soft dust of the road; the gentle gleam of moist

and wondering little eyes on the branches, and in the mossy edges of the boulder, did not disturb him. He sat patiently through it all, as if he had not yet made up his mind.

But when the stage came with the flashing sun the next morning, and the irresistible clamour of life and action, the driver suddenly laid his four spirited horses on their haunches before the quiet spot. The express messenger clambered down from the box, and approached what seemed to be a heap of cast-off clothes upon the boulder.

"He don't seem to be drunk," he said, in reply to a querulous interrogation from the passengers. "I can't make him out. His eyes are open; but he cannot speak or move. Take a look at him, Doc."

A rough, unprofessional-looking man here descended from the inside of the coach, and carelessly thrusting aside the other curious passengers, suddenly leant over the heap of clothes in a professional attitude.

"He is dead," said one of the passengers.

The rough man let the passive head sink softly down again.

"No such luck for him," he said curtly, but not unkindly. "It's a stroke of paralysis—and about as big as they make 'em. It's a toss-up if he speaks or moves again as long as he lives."

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Alvin Mulrady announced his intention of growing potatoes and garden "truck" on the green slopes of Los Gatos, the mining community of that region, and the adjacent hamlet of "Rough-and-Ready," regarded it with the contemptuous indifference usually shown by those adventurers towards all bucolic pursuits. There was certainly no active objection to the occupation of two hillsides,

which gave so little promise to the prospector for gold that it was currently reported that a single prospector, called "Slinn," had once gone mad or imbecile through repeated failures. The only opposition came, incongruously enough, from the original pastoral owner of the soil, one Don Ramon Alvarado, whose claim for seven leagues of hill and valley, including the now prosperous towns of Rough-and-Ready and Red Dog, was met with simple derision from the squatters and miners.

"Looks ez ef we woz goin' to travel three thousand miles to open up his d——d old wilderness, and then pay for the increased valoo we give it—don't it? Oh yes, certainly!" was their ironical commentary.

Mulrady might have been pardoned for adopting this popular opinion; but by an equally incongruous sentiment, peculiar, however, to the man, he called upon Don Ramon, and actually offered to purchase the land, or "go shares" with him in the agricultural profits. It was alleged that the Don was so struck with this concession, that he not only granted the land, but struck up a quaint, reserved friendship for the simple-minded agriculturist and his family. It is scarcely necessary to add that this intimacy was viewed by the miners with the contempt that it deserved. They would have been more contemptuous, however, had they known the opinion that Don Ramon entertained of their particular vocation, which he early confided to Mulrady.

"They are savages who expect to reap where they have not sown; to take out of the earth without returning anything to it but their precious carcasses; heathens, who worship the mere stones they dig up."

"And was there no Spaniard who ever dug gold?" asked Mulrady simply.

"Ah, there are Spaniards and Moors," responded Don Ramon sententiously. "Gold has been dug, and by cabal-

leros ; but no good ever came of it. There were Alvaradoes in Sonora, look you, who had mines of *silver*, and worked them with peons and mules, and lost their money—a gold mine to work a silver one—like gentlemen ! But this grubbing in the dirt with one's fingers that a little gold may stick to them, it is not for caballeros. And, then, one says nothing of the curse."

"The curse!" echoed Mary Mulrady, with youthful feminine superstition. "What is that?"

"You knew not, friend Mulrady, that when these lands were given to my ancestors by Charles V., the Bishop of Monterey laid a curse upon any who should desecrate them. Good ! Let us see ! Of the three Americanos who founded yonder town, one was shot, another died of fever—poisoned, you understand, by the soil—and the last got himself crazy of aguardiente. Even the *científico*,¹ who came here years ago and spied into the trees and the herbs, he was afterwards punished for his profanation, and died of an accident in other lands. But," added Don Ramon, with grave courtesy, "this touches not yourself. Through me, *you* are of the soil."

Indeed, it would seem as if a secure, if not a rapid, prosperity was the result of Don Ramon's manorial patronage. The potato patch and market-garden flourished exceedingly ; the rich soil responded with magnificent vagaries of growth ; the even sunshine set the seasons at defiance with extraordinary and premature crops. The salt pork and biscuit consuming settlers did not allow their contempt of Mulrady's occupation to prevent their profiting by this opportunity for changing their diet. The gold they had taken from the soil presently began to flow into his pockets

¹ Don Ramon probably alluded to the eminent naturalist Douglas, who visited California before the gold excitement, and died of an accident in the Sandwich Islands.

in exchange for his more modest treasures. The little cabin, which barely sheltered his family—a wife, son, and daughter—was enlarged, extended, and refitted, but in turn abandoned for a more pretentious house on the opposite hill. A white-washed fence replaced the rudely-split rails which had kept out the wilderness. By degrees, the first evidences of cultivation—the gashes of red soil, the piles of brush and undergrowth, the bared boulders and heaps of stone—melted away, and were lost under a carpet of lighter green, which made an oasis in the tawny desert of wild oats on the hillside. Water was the only free boon denied this Garden of Eden; what was necessary for irrigation had to be brought from a mining ditch at great expense, and was of insufficient quantity. In this emergency Mulrady thought of sinking an artesian well on the sunny slope beside his house; not, however, without serious consultation and much objection from his Spanish patron. With great austerity Don Ramon pointed out that this trifling with the entrails of the earth was not only an indignity to Nature almost equal to shaft-sinking and tunnelling, but was a disturbance of vested interests.

"I and my fathers—San Diego rest them!" said Don Ramon, crossing himself—"were content with wells and cisterns, filled by Heaven at its appointed seasons; the cattle, dumb brutes though they were, knew where to find water when they wanted it. But thou sayest truly," he added, with a sigh, "that was before streams and rivers were choked with hellish engines, and poisoned with their spume. Go on, friend Mulrady, dig and bore if thou wilt, but in a seemly fashion, and not with impious earthquakes and devilish gunpowder."

With this concession Alvin Mulrady began to sink his first artesian shaft. Being debarred the auxiliaries of steam and gunpowder, the work went on slowly. The market-

garden did not suffer meantime, as Mulrady had employed two Chinamen to take charge of the ruder tillage while he superintended the engineering work of the well. This trifling incident marked an epoch in the social condition of the family. Mrs. Mulrady at once assumed a conscious importance among her neighbours. She spoke of her husband's "men"; she alluded to the well as "the works"; she checked the easy frontier familiarity of her customers with pretty Mary Mulrady, her seventeen-year-old daughter. Simple Alvin Mulrady looked with astonishment at this sudden development of the germ planted in all feminine nature to expand in the slightest sunshine of prosperity.

"Look yer, Malviny; ain't ye rather puttin' on airs with the boys that want to be civil to Mamie? Like as not one of 'em may be makin' up to her already."

"You don't mean to say, Alvin Mulrady," responded Mrs. Mulrady with sudden severity, "that you ever thought of givin' your daughter to a common miner; or that I'm goin' to allow her to marry out of our own set?"

"Our own set!" echoed Mulrady feebly, blinking at her in astonishment, and then glancing hurriedly across at his freckle-faced son and the two Chinamen at work in the cabbages.

"Oh, you know what I mean," said Mrs. Mulrady sharply—"the set that we move in. The Alvarados and their friends! Doesn't the old Don come here every day? and ain't his son the right age for Mamie? And ain't they the real first families here—all the same as if they were noblemen? No; leave Mamie to me, and keep to your shaft; there never was a man yet had the least *sabe* about these things, or knew what was due to his family."

Like most of his larger-minded, but feebly-equipped, sex, Mulrady was too glad to accept the truth of the latter proposition, which left the meannesses of life to feminine

manipulation, and went off to his shaft on the hillside. But during that afternoon he was perplexed and troubled. He was too loyal a husband not to be pleased with this proof of an unexpected and superior foresight in his wife, although he was, like all husbands, a little startled by it. He tried to dismiss it from his mind. But looking down from the hillside upon his little venture, whose gradual increase and prosperity had not been beyond his faculties to control and understand, he found himself haunted by the more ambitious projects of his helpmate. From his own knowledge of men, he doubted if Don Ramon, any more than himself, had ever thought of the possibility of a matrimonial connection between the families. He doubted if he would consent to it. And, unfortunately, it was this very doubt that, touching his own pride as a self-made man, made him first seriously consider his wife's proposition. He was as good as Don Ramon any day! With this subtle feminine poison instilled in his veins, carried completely away by the logic of his wife's illogical premises, he almost hated his old benefactor. He looked down upon the little Garden of Eden, where his Eve had just tempted him with the fatal fruit, and felt a curious consciousness that he was losing its simple and innocent enjoyment for ever.

Happily, about this time Don Ramon died. It is not probable that he ever knew the amiable intentions of Mrs. Mulrady in regard to his son, who now succeeded to the paternal estate, sadly partitioned by relatives and lawsuits. The feminine Mulradys attended the funeral, in expensive mourning from Sacramento; even the gentle Alvin was forced into ready-made broadcloth, which accented his good-natured but unmistakably common presence. Mrs. Mulrady spoke openly of her "loss"; declared that the old families were dying out; and impressed the wives of a few new arrivals at Red Dog with the belief that her own

family was contemporary with the Alvarados, and that her husband's health was far from perfect. She extended a motherly sympathy to the orphaned Don Cæsar. Reserved, like his father, in natural disposition, he was still more gravely ceremonious from his loss; and, perhaps from the shyness of an evident partiality for Mamie Mulrady, he rarely availed himself of her mother's sympathising hospitality. But he carried out the intentions of his father by consenting to sell to Mulrady, for a small sum, the property he had leased. The idea of purchasing had originated with Mrs. Mulrady.

"It'll be all in the family," had observed that astute lady, "and it's better for the looks of the things that we shouldn't be his tenants."

It was only a few weeks later that she was startled by hearing her husband's voice calling her from the hillside as he rapidly approached the house. Mamie was in her room, putting on a new pink cotton gown, in honour of an expected visit from young Don Cæsar, and Mrs. Mulrady was tidying the house in view of the same event. Something in the tone of her good man's voice, and the unusual circumstance of his return to the house before work was done, caused her, however, to drop her dusting cloth, and run to the kitchen-door to meet him. She saw him running through the rows of cabbages, his face shining with perspiration and excitement, a light in his eyes which she had not seen for years. She recalled, without sentiment, that he looked like that when she had called him—a poor farm hand of her father's—out of the brush heap at the back of their former home in Illinois, to hear the consent of her parents. The recollection was the more embarrassing as he threw his arms around her, and pressed a resounding kiss upon her sallow cheek.

"Sakes alive, Mulrady!" she said, exorcising the ghost

of a blush that had also been recalled from the past with her housewife's apron. "What are you doin', and company expected every minit?"

"Malviny, I've struck it; and struck it rich!"

She disengaged herself from his arms, without excitement, and looked at him with bright, but shrewdly observant eyes.

"I've struck it in the well. The regular vein that the boys have been looking for. There's a fortin' fer you and Mamie—thousands and tens of thousands!"

"Wait a minit."

She left him quickly, and went to the foot of the stairs. He could hear her wonderingly and distinctly.

"Ye can take off that new frock, Mamie," she called out.

There was a sound of undisguised expostulation from Mamie.

"I'm speaking," said Mrs. Mulrady emphatically.

The murmuring ceased. Mrs. Mulrady returned to her husband. The interruption seemed to have taken off the keen edge of his enjoyment. He at once abdicated his momentary elevation as a discoverer, and waited for her to speak.

"Ye haven't told any one yet?" she asked.

"No. I was alone down in the shaft. Ye see, Malviny, I wasn't expectin' of anything," he began, with an attempt at fresh enjoyment; "I was just clearin' out, and hadn't reckoned on anythin'."

"You see, I was right when I advised your taking the land," she said, without heeding him.

Mulrady's face fell.

"I hope Don Cæsar won't think——" he began hesitatingly. "I reckon, perhaps, I oughter make some sorter compensation, you know."

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Mulrady decidedly. "Don't be a

fool. Any gold discovery, anyhow, would have been yours—that's the law. And you bought the land without any restrictions. Besides, you never had any idea of this"—she stopped and looked him suddenly in the face—"had you?"

Mulrady opened his honest, pale-grey eyes widely.

"Why, Malviny, you know I hadn't. I could swear——"

"Don't swear, and don't let on to anybody but what you *did* know it was there. Now, Alvin Mulrady, listen to me." Her voice here took the strident form of action. "Knock off work at the shaft, and send your man away at once. Put on your things, catch the next stage to Sacramento at four o'clock, and take Mamie with you."

"Mamie!" echoed Mulrady feebly.

"You want to see Lawyer Cole and my brother Jim at once," she went on, without heeding him, "and Mamie wants a change and some proper clothes. Leave the rest to me and Abner. I'll break it to Mamie, and get her ready."

Mulrady passed his hands through his tangled hair, wet with perspiration. He was proud of his wife's energy and action; he did not dream of opposing her, but somehow he was disappointed. The charming glamour and joy of his discovery had vanished before he could fairly dazzle her with it; or, rather, she was not dazzled with it at all. It had become like business, and the expression "breaking it" to Mamie jarred upon him. He would have preferred to tell her himself—to watch the colour come into her delicate oval face, to have seen her soft eyes light with an innocent joy he had not seen in his wife's; and he felt a sinking conviction that his wife was the last one to awaken it.

"You ain't got any time to lose," she said impatiently, as he hesitated.

Perhaps it was her impatience that struck harshly upon

him; perhaps, if she had not accepted her good fortune so confidently, he would not have spoken what was in his mind at the time; but he said gravely—

"Wait a minit, Malviny; I've suthin' to tell you 'bout this find of mine that's sing'lar."

"Go on," she said quickly.

"Lyin' among the rotten quartz of the vein was a pick," he said constrainedly, "and the face of the vein sorter looked ez if it had been worked at. Follering the line outside to the base of the hill there was signs of there having been an old tunnel; but it had fallen in, and was blocked up."

"Well?" said Mrs. Mulrady contemptuously.

"Well," returned her husband, somewhat disconcertedly, "it kinder looked as if some feller might have discovered it before."

"And went away and left it for others! That's likely—ain't it?" interrupted his wife, with ill-disguised intolerance. "Everybody knows the hill wasn't worth that for prospectin'; and it was abandoned when we came here. It's your property, and you've paid for it. Are you goin' to wait to advertise for the owner, Alvin Mulrady, or are you going to Sacramento at four o'clock to-day?"

Mulrady started. He had never seriously believed in the possibility of a previous discovery, but his conscientious nature had prompted him to give it a fair consideration. She was probably right. What he might have thought had she treated it with equal conscientiousness he did not consider.

"All right," he said simply. "I reckon we'll go at once."

"And when you talk to Lawyer Cole and Jim, keep that silly stuff about the pick to yourself. There's no use of putting queer ideas into other people's heads because you happen to have 'em yourself."

When the hurried arrangements were at last completed, and Mr. Mulrady and Mamie, accompanied by a taciturn and discreet Chinaman, carrying their scant luggage, were on their way to the high-road to meet the up stage, the father gazed somewhat anxiously and wistfully into his daughter's face. He had looked forward to those few moments to enjoy the freshness and *naïveté* of Mamie's youthful delight and enthusiasm as a relief to his wife's practical, far-sighted realism. There was a pretty pink suffusion in her delicate cheek, the breathless happiness of a child in her half-opened little mouth, and a beautiful absorption in her large grey eyes that augured well for him.

"Well, Mamie, how do we like bein' an heiress? How do we like layin' over all the gals between this and Frisco?"

"Eh?"

She had not heard him. The tender, beautiful eyes were engaged in an anticipatory examination of the remembered shelves in the "Fancy Emporium" at Sacramento; in reading the admiration of the clerks; in glancing down a little criticisingly at the broad cowhide brogues that strode at her side; in looking up the road for the stage-coach; in regarding the fit of her new gloves—everywhere but in the loving eyes of the man beside her.

He, however, repeated the question, touched with her charming preoccupation, and passing his arm around her little waist.

"I like it well enough, pa, you know!" she said, slightly disengaging his arm, but adding a perfunctory little squeeze to his elbow to soften the separation. "I always had an idea *something* would happen. I suppose I'm looking like a fright," she added; "but ma made me hurry to get away before Don Cæsar came."

"And you didn't want to go without seeing him?" he added archly.

"I didn't want him to see me in this frock," said Mamie simply. "I reckon that's why ma made me change," she added, with a slight laugh.

"Well, I reckon you're allus good enough for him in any dress," said Mulrady, watching her attentively, "and more than a match for him *now*," he added triumphantly.

"I don't know about that," said Mamie. "He's been rich all the time, and his father and grandfather before him; while we've been poor, and his tenants."

His face changed. The look of bewilderment with which he had followed her words give way to one of pain and then of anger.

"Did he git off such stuff as that?" he asked quickly.

"No; I'd like to catch him at it," responded Mamie promptly. "There's better nor him to be had for the asking now."

They had walked on a few moments in aggrieved silence, and the Chinaman might have imagined some misfortune had just befallen them. But Mamie's teeth shone again between her parted lips.

"La, pa! it ain't that. He cares everything for me, and I do for him; and if ma hadn't got new ideas——"

She stopped suddenly.

"What new ideas?" queried her father anxiously.

"Oh, nothing! I wish, pa, you'd put on your other boots! Everybody can see these are made for the furrows. And you ain't a market-gardener any more."

"What am I, then?" asked Mulrady, with a half pleased, half uneasy laugh.

"You're a capitalist, *I* say; but ma says a landed proprietor."

Nevertheless, the landed proprietor, when he reached the boulder on the Red Dog highway, sat down in somewhat moody contemplation, with his head bowed over the

broad cowhide brogues that seemed to have already gathered enough of the soil to indicate his right to that title.

Mamie, who had recovered her spirits, but had not lost her preoccupation, wandered off by herself in the meadow, or ascended the hillside as her occasional impatience at the delay of the coach, or the following of some ambitious fancy, alternately prompted her. She was so far away at one time that the stage-coach, which finally drew up before Mulrady, was obliged to wait for her.

When she was deposited safely inside, and Mulrady had climbed the box beside the driver, the latter remarked curtly—

“Ye gave me a right smart skeer a minit ago, stranger.”

“Ez how?”

“Well, about three years ago, I was comin’ down this yer grade, at just this time, and, sittin’ right on the stone, in just your attitude, was a man about your build and years. I pulled up to let him in, when, darn my skin! if he ever moved, but looked sorter at me without speakin’. I called to him, and he never answered, ‘cept with that idiotic stare. I then let him have my opinion of him, in mighty strong English, and drove off, leavin’ him there. The next morning, when I came by on the up trip, darn my skin! if he wasn’t thar, but lying’ all of a heap on the boulder. Jim drops down and picks him up. Doctor Duchesne, *ez* was along, allows it was a played-out prospector, with a big case of paralysis, and we expressed him through to the county hospital, like so much dead freight. I’ve allus bin kinder superstitious about passin’ that rock, and when I saw you just now, sittin’ thar, dazed like, with your head down like the other chap, it rather threw me off my centre.”

In the inexplicable and half superstitious uneasiness that this coincidence awakened in Mulrady’s unimaginative mind, he was almost on the point of disclosing his good fortune

to the driver, in order to prove how preposterous was the parallel, but checked himself in time.

"Did you find out who he was?" broke in a rash passenger.

"Did he ever get over it?" added another unfortunate.

With a pause of insulting scorn at the interruption, the driver resumed, pointedly, to Mulrady—

"The p'int of the whole thing was my cussin' a helpless man ez could neither cuss back nor shoot, and then afterwards takin' you for his ghost, layin' for me, to get even." He paused again, and then added carelessly: "They say he never kem to enuff to let on who he was or whar he kem from; and he was eventooally taken to a 'Sylum for Doddering Idjits and Gin'ral and Permiskus Imbeciles at Sacramento. I've heerd it's considered a first-class insti-tooshun, not only for them ez is paralysed and can't talk, but for them ez is the reverse and is too chipper. Now," he added languidly, turning for the first time to his miserable questioners, "how did *you* chaps find it?"

CHAPTER II

WHEN the news of the discovery of gold in Mulrady shaft was finally made public, it created an excitement hitherto unknown in the history of the country. Half of Red Dog and all Rough-and-Ready were emptied upon the yellow hills surrounding Mulrady's until their circling camp-fires looked like a besieging army that had invested his peaceful pastoral home, preparatory to carrying it by assault. Unfortunately for them, they found the various points of vantage already garrisoned with notices of "pre-emption" for mining purposes in the name of the various members of the Alvarado family.

This stroke of business was due to Mrs. Mulrady, as a means of mollifying the conscientious scruples of her husband and of placating the Alvarados, in view of some remote contingency. It is but fair to say that this degradation of his father's Castilian principles was opposed by Don Cæsar.

"You needn't work them yourself, but sell out to them that will ; it's the only way to keep the prospectors from taking it without paying for it at all," argued Mrs. Mulrady.

Don Cæsar finally assented ; perhaps less to the business arguments of Mulrady's wife than to the simple suggestion of Mamie's mother. Enough that he realised a sum in money for a few acres that exceeded the last ten years' income of Don Ramon's seven leagues.

Equally unprecedented and extravagant was the realisation of the discovery in Mulrady's shaft. It was alleged that a company, hastily formed in Sacramento, paid him a million of dollars down, leaving him still a controlling two-thirds interest in the mine. With an obstinacy, however, that amounted almost to a moral conviction, he refused to include the house and potato-patch in the property. When the company had yielded the point, he declined with equal tenacity to part with it to outside speculators on even the most extravagant offers. In vain Mrs. Mulrady protested ; in vain she pointed out to him that the retention of the evidence of his former humble occupation was a green blot upon their social escutcheon.

"If you will keep the land, build on it, and root up the garden."

But Mulrady was adamant.

"It's the only thing I ever made myself, and got out of the soil with my own hands ; it's the beginning of my fortune, and it may be the end of it. Mebbe, I'll be glad enough to have it to come back to some day, and be thankful for the square meal I can dig out of it."

By repeated pressure, however, Mulrady yielded the compromise that a portion of it should be made into a vine-yard and flower-garden, and by a suitable colouring of ornament and luxury obliterate its vulgar part. Less successful, however, was that energetic woman in another effort to mitigate the austerities of their earlier state. It occurred to her to utilise the softer accents of Don Cæsar in the pronunciation of their family name, and privately had "Mulrade" take the place of Mulrady on her visiting-card

"It might be Spanish," she argued with her husband. "Lawyer Cole says most American names are corrupted, and how do you know that yours ain't?"

Mulrady, who would not swear that his ancestors came from Ireland to the Carolinas in '98, was helpless to refute the assertion. But the terrible Nemesis of an un-Spanish, American provincial speech avenged the orthographical outrage at once. When Mrs. Mulrady began to be addressed orally, as well as by letter, as "Mrs. Mulraid," and when simple amatory effusions to her daughter rhymed with "lovely maid," she promptly restored the original vowel.

But she fondly clung to the Spanish courtesy which transformed her husband's baptismal name, and usually spoke of him—in his absence—as "Don Alvino." But in the presence of his short, square figure, his orange-tawny hair, his twinkling grey eyes, and retroussé nose, even that dominant woman withheld his title. It was currently reported at Red Dog that a distinguished foreigner had one day approached Mulrady with the formula—

"I believe I have the honour of addressing Don Alvino Mulrady?"

"You kin bet your boots, stranger, that part of that's me," had returned that simple hidalgo.

Although Mrs. Mulrady would have preferred that Mamie

should remain at Sacramento until she could join her, preparatory to a trip to the States and Europe, she yielded to her daughter's desire to astonish Rough-and-Ready, before she left, with her new wardrobe, and unfold in the parent nest the delicate and painted wings with which she was to fly from them for ever.

"I don't want them to remember me afterwards in those spotted prints, ma, and like as not say I never had a decent frock until I went away."

There was something so like the daughter of her mother in this delicate foresight that the touched and gratified parent kissed her and assented. The result was gratifying beyond her expectation. In that few weeks' sojourn at Sacramento, the young girl seemed to have adapted and assimilated herself to the latest modes of fashion with even more than the usual American girl's pliancy and taste. Equal to all emergencies of style and material, she seemed to supply, from some hitherto unknown quality she possessed, the grace and manner peculiar to each. Untrammeled by tradition, education, or precedent, she had the Western girl's confidence in all things being possible which makes them so often probable.

Mr. Mulrady looked at his daughter with mingled sentiments of pride and awe. Was it possible that this delicate creature, so superior to himself that he seemed like a degenerate scion of her remoter race, was his own flesh and blood? Was she the daughter of her mother, who even in her remembered youth was never equipped like this? If the thought brought no pleasure to his simple, loving nature, it at least spared him the pain of what might have seemed ingratitude in one more akin to himself.

"The fact is, we ain't quite up to her style," was his explanation and apology.

^t A vague belief that in another and a better world than

this he might approximate and understand this perfection somewhat soothed and sustained him.

It was quite consistent, therefore, that the embroidered cambric dress which Mamie Mulrady wore one summer afternoon on the hillside at Los Gatos, while to the critical feminine eye at once artistic and expensive, should not seem incongruous to her surroundings or to herself in the eyes of a general audience. It certainly did not seem so to one pair of frank humorous ones that glanced at her from time to time, as their owner, a young fellow of five-and-twenty, walked at her side. He was the new editor of the *Rough-and-Ready Record*, and, having been her fellow-passenger from Sacramento, had already once or twice availed himself of her father's invitation to call upon them. Mrs. Mulrady had not discouraged this mild flirtation. Whether she wished to disconcert Don Cæsar for some occult purpose, or whether, like the rest of her sex, she had an overweening confidence in the unheroic, unseductive, and purely platonic character of masculine humour, did not appear.

"When I say I'm sorry you are going to leave us, Miss Mulrady," said the young fellow lightly, "you will comprehend my unselfishness, since I frankly admit your departure would be a positive relief to me as an editor and a man. The pressure in the Poet's Corner of the *Record* since it was mistakenly discovered that a person of your name might be induced to seek the 'glade' and 'shade' without being 'afraid,' 'dismayed,' or 'betrayed,' has been something enormous, and, unfortunately, I am debarred from rejecting anything, on the just ground that I am myself an interested admirer."

"It is dreadful to be placarded around the country by one's own full name, isn't it?" said Mamie, without, however, expressing much horror in her face.

"They think it much more respectful than to call you 'Mamie,'" he responded lightly; "and many of your admirers are middle-aged men, with a mediæval style of compliment. I've discovered that amatory versifying isn't entirely a youthful passion. Colonel Cash is about as fatal with a couplet as with a double-barrelled gun, and scatters as terribly. Judge Butts and Doctor Wilson have both discerned the resemblance of your gifts to those of Venus, and their own to Apollo. But don't undervalue those tributes, Miss Mulrady," he added more seriously. "You'll have thousands of admirers where you are going; but you'll be willing to admit in the end, I think, that none were more honest and respectful than your subjects at Rough-and-Ready and Red Dog." He stopped, and added in a graver tone: "Does Don Cæsar write poetry?"

"He has something better to do," said the young lady pertly.

"I can easily imagine that," he returned mischievously; "it must be a pallid substitute for other opportunities."

"What did you come here for?" she asked suddenly.

"To see you."

"Nonsense! You know what I mean. Why did you ever leave Sacramento to come here? I should think it would suit you so much better than this place."

"I suppose I was fired by your father's example, and wished to find a gold mine."

"Men like you never do," she said simply.

"Is that a compliment, Miss Mulrady?"

"I don't know. But I think that you think that it is."

He gave her the pleased look of one who had unexpectedly found a sympathetic intelligence.

"Do I? This is interesting. Let's sit down."

In their desultory rambling they had reached, quite unconsciously, the large boulder at the roadside. Mamie

hesitated a moment, looked up and down the road, and then, with an already opulent indifference to the damaging of her spotless skirt, sat herself upon it with her furled parasol held by her two little hands thrown over her half drawn-up knee. The young editor, half sitting, half leaning against the stone, began to draw figures in the sand with his cane.

"On the contrary, Miss Mulrady, I hope to make some money here. You are leaving Rough-and-Ready because you are rich. We are coming to it because we are poor."

"We?" echoed Mamie lazily, looking up the road.

"Yes; my father and two sisters."

"I am sorry. I might have known them if I hadn't been going away." At the same moment it flashed across her mind that, if they were like the man before her, they might prove disagreeably independent and critical. "Is your father in business?" she asked.

He shook his head. After a pause, he said, punctuating his sentences with the point of his stick in the soft dust—

"He is paralysed, and out of his mind, Miss Mulrady. I came to California to seek him, as all news of him ceased three years since; and I found him only two weeks ago, alone, friendless—an unrecognised pauper in the county hospital."

"Two weeks ago? That was when I went to Sacramento."

"Very probably."

"It must have been very shocking to you?"

"It was."

"I should think you'd feel real bad?"

"I do, at times." He smiled and laid his stick on the stone. "You now see, Miss Mulrady, how necessary to me is this good fortune that you don't think me worthy of. Meantime, I must try to make a home for them at Rough-and-Ready."

Miss Mulrady put down her knee and her parasol.

"We mustn't stay here much longer, you know."

"Why?"

"Why, the stage-coach comes by at about this time."

"And you think the passengers will observe us sitting here?"

"Of course they will."

"Miss Mulrady, I implore you to stay."

He was leaning over her with such apparent earnestness of voice and gesture that the colour came into her cheek. For a moment she scarcely dared to lift her conscious eyes to his. When she did so, she suddenly glanced her own aside with a flash of anger. He was laughing.

"If you have any pity for me, do not leave me now," he repeated. "Stay a moment longer and my fortune is made. The passengers will report us all over Red Dog as engaged. I shall be supposed to be in your father's secrets, and shall be sought after as a director of all the new companies. The *Record* will double its circulation; poetry will drop out of its columns; advertisements rush to fill its place; and I shall receive five dollars a week more salary, if not seven and a half. Never mind the consequences to yourself at such a moment. I assure you there will be none. You can deny it the next day—I will deny it—nay, more, the *Record* itself will deny it in an extra edition of one thousand copies, at ten cents each. Linger a moment longer, Miss Mulrady. Fly, oh, fly not yet! They're coming—hark! ho! By Jove, it's only Don Caesar!"

It was, indeed, only the young scion of the house of Alvarado, blue-eyed, sallow-skinned, and high-shouldered, coming towards them on a fiery, half-broken mustang, whose very spontaneous lawlessness seemed to demonstrate and relieve the grave and decorous ease of his rider. Even in his burlesque preoccupation the editor of the *Record* did

not withhold his admiration of this perfect horsemanship. Mamie, who, in her wounded *amour propre*, would like to have made much of it to annoy her companion, was thus estopped any ostentatious compliment.

Don Cæsar lifted his hat with sweet seriousness to the lady, with grave courtesy to the gentleman. While the lower half of this centaur was apparently quivering with fury, and stamping the ground in his evident desire to charge upon the pair, the upper half, with natural dignity, looked from the one to the other as if to leave the privilege of an explanation with them. But Mamie was too wise, and her companion too indifferent to offer one.

A slight shade passed over Don Cæsar's face. To complicate the situation at that moment, the expected stage-coach came rattling by. With quick feminine intuition, Mamie caught in the face of the driver and the express-man, and reflected in the mischievous eyes of her companion, a peculiar interpretation of their meeting that was not removed by the whispered assurance of the editor that the passengers were anxiously looking back "to see the shooting."

The young Spaniard, equally oblivious of humour or curiosity, remained impassive.

"You know Mr. Slinn, of the *Record*," said Mamie, "don't you?"

Don Cæsar had never before met the Señor Esslenn. He was under the impression that it was a Señor Robinson that was of the *Record*.

"Oh, *he* was shot," said Slinn. "I am taking his place."

"*Bueno!* To be shot too? I trust not."

Slinn looked quickly and sharply into Don Cæsar's grave face. He seemed to be incapable of any double meaning. However, as he had no serious reason for awakening Don Cæsar's jealousy, and very little desire to become an em-

barrassing third in this conversation, and possibly a burden to the young lady, he proceeded to take his leave of her. From a sudden feminine revulsion of sympathy, or from some unintelligible instinct of diplomacy, Mamie said, as she extended her hand—

“I hope you’ll find a home for your family near here. Mamma wants pa to let our old house. Perhaps it might suit you, if not too far from your work. You might speak to ma about it.”

“Thank you; I will,” responded the young man, pressing her hand with unaffected cordiality.

Don Cæsar watched him until he had disappeared behind the wayside buckeyes.

“He is a man of family—this one—your countryman?”

It seemed strange to her to have a mere acquaintance spoken of as “her countryman”—not the first time nor the last time in her career. As there appeared no trace or sign of jealousy in her questioner’s manner, she answered briefly, but vaguely—

“Yes; it’s a shocking story. His father disappeared some years ago, and he has just found him—a helpless paralytic—in the Sacramento Hospital. He’ll have to support him, and they’re very poor.”

“So, then, they are not independent of each other always—these fathers and children of Americanos?”

“No,” said Mamie shortly. Without knowing why, she felt inclined to resent Don Cæsar’s manner. His serious gravity—gentle and high-bred as it was, undoubtedly—was somewhat trying to her at times, and seemed even more so after Slinn’s irreverent humour. She picked up her parasol a little impatiently, as if to go.

But Don Cæsar had already dismounted, and tied his horse to a tree with a strong lariat that hung at his saddlebow.

"Let us walk through the woods towards your home. I can return alone for the horse, when you shall dismiss me."

They turned in among the pines that, overcrowding the hollow, crept partly up the side of the hill of Mulrady's shaft. A disused trail, almost hidden by the wax-leaved yerba buena, led from the highway, and finally lost itself in the undergrowth. It was a lover's walk; they were lovers evidently, and yet the man was too self-poised in his gravity, the young woman too conscious and critical, to suggest an absorbing or oblivious passion.

"I should not have made myself so obtrusive to-day before your friend," said Don Cæsar, with proud humility, "but I could not understand from your mother whether you were alone or whether my company was desirable. It is of this I have now to speak, Mamie. Lately, your mother has seemed strange to me; avoiding any reference to our affection; treating it lightly, and even, as to-day, I fancy, putting obstacles in the way of our meeting alone. She was disappointed at your return from Sacramento, where, I have been told, she intended you to remain until you left the country; and since your return I have seen you but twice. I may be wrong. Perhaps I do not comprehend the American mother. I have—who knows?—perhaps offended in some point of etiquette, omitted some ceremony that was her due. But when you told me, Mamie, that it was not necessary to speak to *her* first, that it was not the American fashion—"

Mamie started, and blushed slightly.

"Yes," she said hurriedly, "certainly; but ma has been quite queer of late, and she may think—you know—that since—since there has been so much property to dispose of, she ought to have been consulted."

"Then, let us consult her at once, dear child! And as to the property, in Heaven's name, let her dispose of it as

she will. Saints forbid that an Alvarado should ever interfere! And what is it to us, my little one? Enough that Doña Mameta Alvarado will never have less state than the richest bride that ever came to Los Gatos."

Mamie had not forgotten that, scarcely a month ago, even had she loved the man before her no more than she did at present, she would still have been thrilled with delight at these words. Even now she was moved—conscious as she had become that the "state" of a bride of the Alvarados was not all she had imagined, and that the bare adobe court of Los Gatos was open to the sky and the free criticism of Sacramento capitalists.

"Yes, dear," she murmured, with a half childlike pleasure that lit up her face and eyes so innocently that it stopped any minute investigation into its origin and real meaning. "Yes, dear; but we need not have a fuss made about it at present, and perhaps put ma against us. She wouldn't hear of our marrying now; and she might forbid our engagement."

"But you are going away."

"I should have to go to New York or Europe *first*, you know," she answered naïvely, "even if it were all settled. I should have to get things! One couldn't be decent here."

With the recollection of the pink cotton gown in which she had first pledged her troth to him before his eyes, he said, "But you are charming now. You cannot be more so to me. If I am satisfied, little one, with you as you are, let us go together, and then you can get dresses to please others."

She had not expected this importunity. Really, if it came to this, she might have engaged herself to some one like Slinn; he at least would have understood her. He was much cleverer, and certainly more a man of the world. When Slinn had treated her like a child, it was with the

humorous tolerance of an admiring superior, and not the didactic impulse of a guardian. She did not say this, nor did her pretty eyes indicate it, as in the instance of her brief anger with Slinn. She only said gently—

“I should have thought you, of all men, would have been particular about your wife doing the proper thing. But never mind! Don’t let us talk any more about it. Perhaps, as it seems such a great thing to you, and so much trouble, there may be no necessity for it at all.”

I do not think that the young lady deliberately planned this charming illogical deduction from Don Cæsar’s speech, or that she calculated its effect upon him; but it was part of her nature to say it, and profit by it. Under the unjust lash of it, his pride gave way.

“Ah, do you not see why I wish to go with you?” he said, with sudden and unexpected passion. “You are beautiful; you are good; it has pleased Heaven to make you rich also; but you are a child in experience, and know not your own heart. With your beauty, your goodness, and your wealth, you will attract all to you—as you do here—because you cannot help it. But you will be equally helpless, little one, if *they* should attract *you*—and you had no tie to fall back upon.”

It was an unfortunate speech. The words were Don Cæsar’s; but the thought she had heard before from her mother, although the deduction had been of a very different kind. Mamie followed the speaker with bright but visionary eyes. There must be some truth in all this. Her mother had said it; Mr. Slinn had laughingly admitted it. She *had* a brilliant future before her! Was she right in making it impossible by a rash and foolish tie? He himself had said she was inexperienced. She knew it; and yet, what was he doing now but taking advantage of that inexperience? If he really loved her, he would be willing to submit to the

test. She did not ask a similar one from him, and was willing, if she came out of it free, to marry him just the same. There was something so noble in this thought, that she felt for a moment carried away by an impulse of compassionate unselfishness, and smiled tenderly as she looked up in his face.

"Then you consent, Mamie?" he said eagerly, passing his arm around her waist.

"Not now, Cæsar," she said, gently disengaging herself. "I must think it over; we are both too young to act upon it rashly; it would be unfair to you, who are so quiet and have seen so few girls—I mean Americans—to tie yourself to the first one you have known. When I am gone, you will go more into the world. There are Mr. Slinn's two sisters coming here; I shouldn't wonder if they were far cleverer and talked far better than I do; and think how I should feel if I knew that only a wretched pledge to me kept you from loving them!" She stopped, and cast down her eyes.

It was her first attempt at coquetry: for, in her usual charming selfishness, she was perfectly frank and open; and it might not have been her last, but she had gone too far at first, and was not prepared for a recoil of her own argument.

"If you admit that it is possible, then it is possible to *you!*" he said quickly.

She saw her mistake.

"We may not have many opportunities to meet alone," she answered quietly; "and I am sure we would be happier when we meet, not to accuse each other of impossibilities. Let us rather see how we can communicate together if anything should prevent our meeting. Remember, it was only by chance that you were able to see me now. If ma has believed that she ought to have been consulted, our meeting

together in this secret way will only make matters worse. She is even now wondering where I am, and may be suspicious. I must go back at once. At any moment some one may come here looking for me."

"But I have so much to say," he pleaded. "Our time has been so short."

"You can write."

"But what will your mother think of that?" he said, in grave astonishment.

She coloured again, as she returned quickly—

"Of course you must not write to the house. You can leave a letter somewhere for me—say somewhere about here. Stop!" she added, with a sudden girlish gaiety, "see, here's the very place! Look there!"

She pointed to the decayed trunk of a blasted sycamore, a few feet from the trail. A cavity, breast high, half filled with skeleton leaves and pine nuts, showed that it had formerly been a squirrel's hoard, but for some reason had been deserted.

"Look! it's a regular letter-box," she continued gaily, rising on tip-toe to peep into its recesses.

Don Cæsar looked at her admiringly; it seemed like a return to their first idyllic love-making in the old days, when she used to steal out of the cabbage rows in her brown linen apron and sun-bonnet to walk with him in the woods. He recalled the fact to her with the fatality of a lover already seeking to restore in past recollections something that was wanting in the present. She received it with the impatience of youth, to whom the present is all-sufficient.

"I wonder how you could ever have cared for me in that holland apron," she said, looking down upon her new dress.

"Shall I tell you why?" he said fondly, passing his arm

around her waist, and drawing her pretty head nearer his shoulder.

"No—not now!" she said laughingly, but struggling to free herself. "There's not time. Write it, and put it in the box. There!" she added hastily, "listen! What's that?"

"It's only a squirrel," he whispered reassuringly in her ear.

"No; it's somebody coming. I must go! Please, Cæsar dear! There, then——"

She met his kiss half-way, released herself with a lithe movement of her wrist and shoulder, and the next moment seemed to slip into the woods, and was gone.

Don Cæsar listened with a sigh as the last rustling ceased, cast a look at the decayed tree as if to fix it in his memory, and then slowly retraced his steps towards his tethered mustang.

He was right, however, in his surmise of the cause of that interruption. A pair of bright eyes had been watching them from the bough of an adjacent tree. It was a squirrel, who, having had serious and prior intentions of making use of the cavity they had discovered, had only withheld examination by an apparently courteous discretion towards the intruding pair. Now that they were gone, he slipped down the tree and ran towards the decayed stump.

CHAPTER III

APPARENTLY dissatisfied with the result of an investigation which proved that the cavity was unfit as a treasure hoard for a discreet squirrel, whatever its value as a receptacle for the love-tokens of incautious humanity, the little animal at once set about to put things in order. He began by whisking out an immense quantity of dead leaves, disturbed a family of tree-spiders, dissipated a drove of patient aphides

browsing in the bark, as well as their attendant dairymen, the ants, and otherwise ruled it with the high hand of dispossession and a contemptuous opinion of the previous incumbents.

It must not be supposed, however, that his proceedings were altogether free from contemporaneous criticism; a venerable crow sitting on a branch above him displayed great interest in his occupation, and, hopping down a few moments afterwards, disposed of some worm-eaten nuts, a few larvæ, and an insect or two, with languid dignity and without prejudice.

Certain encumbrances, however, still resisted the squirrel's general eviction—among them a folded square of paper with sharply defined edges, that declined investigation, and, owing to a nauseous smell of tobacco, escaped nibbling as it had apparently escaped insect ravages. This, owing to its sharp angles, which persisted in catching in the soft, decaying wood in his whirlwind of house-cleaning, he allowed to remain. Having thus, in a general way, prepared for the coming winter, the self-satisfied little rodent dismissed the subject from his active mind.

His rage and indignation a few days later may be readily conceived, when he found, on returning to his new-made home, another square of paper, folded like the first, but much fresher and whiter, lying within the cavity, on top of some moss which had evidently been placed there for the purpose. This he felt was really more than he could bear, but as it was smaller, with a few energetic kicks and whisks of his tail, he managed to finally dislodge it through the opening, where it fell ignominiously to the earth.

The eager eyes of the ever-attendant crow, however, instantly detected it; he flew to the ground, and, turning it over, examined it gravely. It was certainly not edible, but it was exceedingly rare, and, as an old collector of

curios, he felt he could not pass it by. He lifted it in his beak, and, with a desperate struggle against the super-incipient weight, regained the branch with his prize. Here, by one of those delicious vagaries of animal nature, he apparently at once discharged his mind of the whole affair, became utterly oblivious of it, allowed it to drop without the least concern, and eventually flew away with an abstracted air, as if he had been another bird entirely. The paper got into a manzanita bush, where it remained suspended until the evening, when, being dislodged by a passing wild-cat on its way to Mulrady's hen-roost, it gave that delicately sensitive marauder such a turn that she fled into the adjacent county.

But the troubles of the squirrel were not yet over. On the following day the young man who had accompanied the young woman returned to the trunk, and the squirrel had barely time to make his escape before the impatient visitor approached the opening of the cavity, peered into it, and even passed his hand through its recesses. The delight visible upon his anxious and serious face at the disappearance of the letter, and the apparent proof that it had been called for, showed him to have been its original depositor, and probably awakened a remorseful recollection in the dark bosom of the omnipresent crow, who uttered a conscience-stricken croak from the bough above him. But the young man quickly disappeared again, and the squirrel was once more left in undisputed possession.

A week passed. A weary, anxious interval to Don Cæsar, who had neither seen nor heard from Mamie since their last meeting. Too conscious of his own self-respect to call at the house after the equivocal conduct of Mrs. Mulrady, and too proud to haunt the lanes and approaches in the hope of meeting her daughter, like an ordinary lover, he hid his gloomy thoughts in the monastic shadows of the

courtyard at Los Gatos, or found relief in furious riding at night and early morning on the highway. Once or twice the up stage had been overtaken and passed by a rushing figure as shadowy as a phantom horseman, with only the star-like point of a cigarette to indicate its humanity. It was in one of these fierce recreations that he was obliged to stop in early morning at the blacksmith's shop at Rough-and-Ready to have a loosened horseshoe replaced, and while waiting picked up a newspaper. Don Cæsar seldom read the papers, but, noticing that this was the *Record*, he glanced at its columns. A familiar name suddenly flashed out of the dark type like a spark from the anvil. With a brain and heart that seemed to be beating in unison with the blacksmith's sledge, he read as follows:—

"Our distinguished, fellow-townsman, Alvin Mulrady, Esq., left town day before yesterday to attend an important meeting of directors of the Red Dog Ditch Company, in San Francisco. Society will regret to hear that Mrs. Mulrady and her beautiful and accomplished daughter, who were expecting to depart for Europe at the end of the month, anticipated the event nearly a fortnight by taking this opportunity of accompanying Mr. Mulrady as far as San Francisco, on their way to the East. Mrs. and Miss Mulrady intend to visit London, Paris, and Berlin, and will be absent three years. It is possible that Mr. Mulrady may join them later at one or other of those capitals. Considerable disappointment is felt that a more extended leave-taking was not possible, and that, under the circumstances, no opportunity was offered for a 'send-off' suitable to the condition of the parties, and the esteem in which they are held in Rough-and-Ready."

The paper dropped from his hands. Gone! and without a word! No, that was impossible! There must be some

mistake ; she had written ; the letter had miscarried ; she must have sent word to Los Gatos, and the stupid messenger had blundered ; she had probably appointed another meeting, or expected him to follow to San Francisco. "The day before yesterday!" It was the morning's paper ; she had been gone scarcely two days ; it was not too late yet to receive a delayed message by post, by some forgetful hand—by—ah!—the tree!

Of course it was in the tree, and he had not been there for a week! Why had he not thought of it before? The fault was his, not hers. Perhaps she had gone away believing him faithless, or a country boor.

"In the name of the devil, will you keep me here till eternity!"

The blacksmith stared at him. Don Cæsar suddenly remembered that he was speaking, as he was thinking, in Spanish.

"Ten dollars, my friend, if you have done in five minutes!"

The man laughed.

"That's good enough American," he said, beginning to quicken his efforts.

Don Cæsar again took up the paper. There was another paragraph that recalled his last interview with Mamie :—

"Mr. Harry Slinn, jun., the editor of this paper, has just moved into the pioneer house formerly occupied by Alvin Mulrady, Esq., which has already become historic in the annals of the county. Mr. Slinn brings with him his father—H. J. Slinn, Esq.—and his two sisters. Mr. Slinn, sen., who has been suffering for many years from complete paralysis, we understand is slowly improving ; and it is by the advice of his physicians that he has chosen the invigorating air of the foothills as a change to the debilitating heat of Sacramento."

The affair had been quickly settled, certainly, reflected Don Cæsar, with a slight chill of jealousy, as he thought of Mamie's interest in the young editor. But the next moment he dismissed it from his mind; all except a dull consciousness that, if she really loved him—Don Cæsar—as he loved her, she could not have assisted in throwing into his society the two young sisters of the editor, whom she expected might be so attractive.

Within the five minutes the horse was ready, and Don Cæsar in the saddle again. In less than half-an-hour he was at the wayside boulder. Here he picketed his horse, and took the narrow foot-trail through the hollow. It did not take him long to reach their old trysting-place. With a beating heart he approached the decaying trunk and looked into the cavity. 'There was no letter there!

A few blackened nuts and some of the dry moss he had put there were lying on the ground at its roots. He could not remember whether they were there when he had last visited the spot. He began to grope in the cavity with both hands. His fingers struck against the sharp angles of a flat paper packet; a thrill of joy ran through them and stopped his beating heart; he drew out the hidden object, and was chilled with disappointment.

It was an ordinary-sized envelope of yellowish-brown paper, bearing, besides the usual Government stamp, the official legend of an express company, and showing its age as much by this record of a now obsolete carrying service as by the discoloration of time and atmosphere. Its weight, which was heavier than that of an ordinary letter of the same size and thickness, was evidently due to some loose enclosures, that slightly rustled and could be felt by the fingers, like minute pieces of metal or grains of gravel. It was within Don Cæsar's experience that gold specimens were often sent in that manner. It was in a state of singular

preservation, except the address, which, being written in pencil, was scarcely discernible, and even when deciphered appeared to be incoherent and unfinished. The unknown correspondent had written "Dear Mary" and then "Mrs. Mary Slinn," with an unintelligible scrawl following for the direction. If Don Cæsar's mind had not been lately pre-occupied with the name of the editor he would hardly have guessed the superscription.

In his cruel disappointment and fully aroused indignation, he at once began to suspect a connection of circumstances which at any other moment he would have thought purely accidental, or perhaps not have considered at all. The cavity in the tree had evidently been used as a secret receptacle for letters before; did Mamie know it at the time? and how did she know it? The apparent age of the letter made it preposterous to suppose that it pointed to any secret correspondence of hers with young Mr. Slinn, and the address was not in her handwriting. Was there any secret previous intimacy between the families? There was but one way in which he could connect this letter with Mamie's faithlessness. It was an infamous and grotesquely horrible idea, a thought which sprang as much from his inexperience of the world and his habitual suspiciousness of all humour as anything else. It was that the letter was a brutal joke of Slinn's—a joke perhaps concocted by Mamie and himself—a parting insult that should at the last moment proclaim their treachery and his own credulity. Doubtless it contained a declaration of their shame, and the reason why she had fled from him without a word of explanation. And the enclosure, of course, was some significant and degrading illustration. Those Americans were full of those low conceits: it was their national vulgarity.

He held the letter in his angry hand. He could break it open if he wished, and satisfy himself; but it was not

addressed to *him*, and the instinct of honour, strong even in his rage, was the instinct of an adversary as well. No ; Slinn should open the letter before him. Slinn should explain everything and answer for it. If it was nothing—a mere accident—it would lead to some general explanation, and perhaps even news of Manie. But he would arraign Slinn, and at once. He put the letter in his pocket, quickly retraced his steps to his horse, and, putting spurs to the animal, followed the highroad to the gate of Mulradys' pioneer cabin.

He remembered it well enough. To the cultivated taste it was superior to the more pretentious "new house." During the first year of Mulradys' tenancy the plain square log-cabin had received those additions and attractions which only a tenant can conceive and actual experience suggest ; and in this way the hideous right angles were broken with sheds, "lean-to" extensions, until a certain picturesqueness was given to the irregularity of outline, and a homelike security and companionship to the congregated buildings. It typified the former life of the great capitalist, as the tall new house illustrated the loneliness and isolation that wealth had given him.

But the real points of vantage were the years of cultivation and habitation that had warmed and enriched the soil, and evoked the climbing vines and roses that already hid its unpainted boards, rounded its hard outlines, and gave protection and shadow from the pitiless glare of a summer's long sun, or broke the steady beating of the winter rains. It was true that pea and bean poles surrounded it on one side, and the only access to the house was through the cabbage rows that once were the pride and sustenance of the Mulradys. It was this fact, more than any other, that had impelled Mrs. Mulradys to abandon its site ; she did not like to read the history of their humble origin reflected in the faces of their visitors as they entered.

Don Cæsar tied his horse to the fence and hurriedly approached the house. The door, however, hospitably opened when he was a few paces from it, and when he reached the threshold he found himself unexpectedly in the presence of two pretty girls. They were evidently Slinn's sisters, whom he had neither thought of nor included in the meeting he had prepared. In spite of his preoccupation, he felt himself suddenly embarrassed, not only by the actual distinction of their beauty, but by a kind of likeness that they seemed to bear to Mamie.

"We saw you coming," said the elder unaffectedly. "You are Don Cæsar Alvarado? My brother has spoken of you."

The words recalled Don Cæsar to himself and a sense of courtesy. He was not here to quarrel with these fair strangers at their first meeting; he must seek Slinn elsewhere, and at another time. The frankness of his reception, and the allusion to their brother, made it appear impossible that they should be either a party to his disappointment, or even aware of it. His excitement melted away before a certain lazy ease which the consciousness of their beauty seemed to give them. He was able to put a few courteous inquiries, and, thanks to the paragraph in the *Record*, to congratulate them upon their father's improvement.

"Oh, pa is a great deal better in his health, and has picked up even in the last few days, so that he is able to walk round with crutches," said the elder sister. "The air here seems to invigorate him wonderfully."

"And you know, Esther," said the younger, "I think he begins to take more notice of things, especially when he is out of doors. He looks around on the scenery, and his eye brightens, as if he knew all about it; and sometimes he knits his brows, and looks down so, as if he was trying to remember."

"You know, I suppose," explained Esther, "that since his seizure his memory has been a blank—that is, three or four years of his life seem to have been dropped out of his recollection."

"It might be a mercy sometimes, señora," said Don Cæsar with a grave sigh, as he looked at the delicate features before him, which recalled the face of the absent Mamie.

"That's not very complimentary," said the younger girl laughingly; "for pa didn't recognise us, and only remembered us as little girls."

"Vashti!" interrupted Esther rebukingly; then, turning to Don Cæsar, she added: "My sister Vashti means that father remembers more what happened before he came to California, when we were quite young, than he does of the interval that elapsed. Dr. Duchesne says it's a singular case. He thinks that, with his present progress, he will recover the perfect use of his limbs, though his memory may never come back again."

"Unless—— You forget what the doctor told us this morning," interrupted Vashti again briskly.

"I was going to say it," said Esther a little curtly. "Unless he has another stroke; then he will either die or recover his mind entirely."

Don Cæsar glanced at the bright faces, a trifle heightened in colour by their eager recital and the slight rivalry of narration, and looked grave. He was a little shocked at a certain lack of sympathy and tenderness towards their unhappy parent. They seemed to him not only to have caught that dry, curious toleration of helplessness which characterises even relationship in its attendance upon chronic suffering and weakness, but to have acquired an unconscious habit of turning it to account. In his present sensitive condition, he even fancied that they flirted mildly over their parent's infirmities.

"My brother Harry has gone to Red Dog," continued Esther. "He'll be right sorry to have missed you. Mrs. Mulrady spoke to him about you. You seem to have been great friends. I s'pose you knew her daughter, Mamie. I hear she is very pretty."

Although Don Cæsar was now satisfied that the Slinns knew nothing of Mamie's singular behaviour to him, he felt embarrassed by this conversation.

"Miss Mulrady is very pretty," he said, with grave courtesy; "it is a custom of her race. She left suddenly," he added, with affected calmness.

"I reckon she *did* calculate to stay here longer—so her mother said; but the whole thing was settled a week ago. I know my brother was quite surprised to hear from Mr. Mulrady that if we were going to decide about this house we must do it at once. He had an idea himself of moving out of the big one into this when they left."

"Mamie Mulrady hadn't much to keep her here, considerin' the money and the good looks she has, I reckon," said Vashti. "She isn't the sort of girl to throw herself away in the wilderness when she can pick and choose elsewhere. I only wonder she ever came back from Sacramento. They talk about papa Mulrady having *business* at San Francisco, and *that* hurrying them off! Depend upon it, that 'business' was Mamie herself. Her wish is gospel to them. If she'd wanted to stay and have a farewell party, old Mulrady's business would have been nowhere."

"Ain't you a little rough on Mamie," said Esther, who had been quietly watching the young man's face with her large, languid eyes, "considering that we don't know her, and haven't even the right of friends to criticise?"

"I don't call it rough," returned Vashti frankly, "for I'd do the same if I were in her shoes—and they're four-and-a-halves, for Harry told me so. Give me her money and her

looks, and you wouldn't catch me hanging round these diggings, goin' to choir-meetings Saturdays, church Sundays, and buggy-riding once a month, for society ! No ; Mamie's head was level, you bet ! ”

Don Cæsar rose hurriedly. They would present his compliments to their father, and he would endeavour to find their brother at Red Dog. He, alas ! had neither father, mother, nor sister ; but if they would receive his aunt, the Doña Inez Sepulvida, the next Sunday, when she came from Mass, she should be honoured, and he would be delighted.

It required all his self-possession to deliver himself of this formal courtesy before he could take his leave, and, on the back of his mustang, give way to the rage, disgust, and hatred of everything connected with Mamie that filled his heart.

Conscious of his disturbance, but not entirely appreciating their own share in it, the two girls somewhat wickedly prolonged the interview by following him into the garden.

“ Well, if you *must* leave now,” said Esther at last languidly, “ it ain’t much out of your way to go down through the garden and take a look at pa as you go. He’s somewhere down there, near the woods, and we don’t like to leave him alone too long. You might pass the time of day with him—see if he’s right side up. Vashti and I have got a heap of things to fix here yet ; but if anything’s wrong with him, you can call us. So long.”

Don Cæsar was about to excuse himself hurriedly, but that sudden and acute perception of all kindred sorrow, which belongs to refined suffering, checked his speech. The loneliness of the helpless old man in this atmosphere of active and youthful selfishness touched him. He bowed assent, and turned aside into one of the long perspectives of bean-poles. The girls watched him until out of sight.

"Well," said Vashti, "don't tell *me*. But if there wasn't something between him and that Mamie Mulrady, I don't know a jilted man when I see him."

"Well, you needn't have let him *see* that you knew it, so that any civility of ours would look as if we were ready to take up with her leavings," responded Esther astutely, as the girls re-entered the house.

Meantime, the unconscious object of their criticism walked sadly down the old market-garden whose rude outlines and homely details he once clothed with the poetry of a sensitive man's first love. Well, it was a common cabbage-field and potato-patch after all.

In his disgust he felt conscious of even the loss of that sense of patronage and superiority which had invested his affection for a girl of meaner condition. His self-respect was humiliated with his love. The soil and dirt of those wretched cabbages had clung to him, but not to her. It was she who had gone higher; it was he who was left in the vulgar ruins of his misplaced passion.

He reached the bottom of the garden without observing any sign of the lonely invalid. He looked up and down the cabbage rows and through the long perspective of pea-vines without result. There was a newer trail leading from a gap in the vines to the wooded hollow which undoubtedly intersected the little path that he and Mamie had once followed from the highroad. If the old man had taken this trail, he had possibly overtired his strength, and there was the more reason why he should continue his search, and render any assistance if required. There was another idea that occurred to him, which eventually decided him to go on. It was that both these trails led to the decayed sycamore stump, and that the older Slinn might have something to do with the mysterious letter.

Quickenning his steps through the field, he entered the

hollow, and reached the intersecting trail as he expected. To the right it lost itself in the dense woods in the direction of the ominous stump ; to the left it descended in nearly a straight line to the highway, now plainly visible, as was equally the boulder on which he had last discovered Mamie sitting with young Slinn. If he was not mistaken, there was a figure sitting there now. It was surely a man. And by that half-bowed, helpless attitude the object of his search !

It did not take him long to descend the track to the highway and approach the stranger. He was seated with his hands upon his knees, gazing in a vague, absorbed fashion upon the hillside, now crowned with the engine-house and chimney that marked the site of Mulrady's shaft. He started slightly and looked up as Don Cæsar paused before him. The young man was surprised to see that the unfortunate man was not as old as he had expected, and that his expression was one of quiet and beatified contentment.

"Your daughters told me you were here," said Don Cæsar, with gentle respect. "I am Cæsar Alvarado, your not very far neighbour ; very happy to pay his respects to you, as he has to them."

"My daughters?" said the old man vaguely. "Oh yes — nice little girls. And my boy Harry. Did you see Harry? Fine little fellow, Harry."

"I am glad to hear that you are better," said Don Cæsar hastily, "and that the air of our country does you no harm. God benefit you, *señor*," he added, with a profoundly reverential gesture, dropping unconsciously into the religious habit of his youth. "May He protect you, and bring you back to health and happiness!"

"Happiness?" said Slinn amazedly. "I am happy—very happy ! I have everything I want: good air, good food, good clothes, pretty little children, kind friends——" He smiled benignantly at Don Cæsar. "God is very good to me !"

Indeed, he seemed very happy; and his face, albeit crowned with white hair, unmarked by care and any disturbing impression, had so much of satisfied youth in it that the grave features of his questioner made him appear the elder. Nevertheless, Don Cæsar noticed that his eyes, when withdrawn from him, sought the hillside with the same visionary abstraction.

"It is a fine view, Señor Esslinn," said Don Cæsar.

"It is a beautiful view, sir," said Slinn, turning his happy eyes upon him for a moment, only to rest them again on the green slope opposite.

"Beyond that hill which you are looking at—not far, Señor Esslinn—I live. You shall come and see me there—you and your family."

"You—you—live there?" stammered the invalid, with a troubled expression—the first and only change to the complete happiness that had hitherto suffused his face. "You—and your name is—is Ma—"

"Alvarado," said Don Cæsar gently. "Cæsar Alvarado."

"You said Masters," said the old man, with sudden querulousness.

"No, good friend. I said Alvarado," said Don Cæsar gravely.

"If you didn't say Masters, how could *I* say it? I don't know any Masters."

Don Cæsar was silent. In another moment the happy tranquillity returned to Slinn's face, and Don Cæsar continued—

"It is not a long walk over the hill, though it is far by the road. When you are better, you shall try it. Yonder little trail leads to the top of the hill—and then—"

He stopped, for the invalid's face had again assumed its troubled expression. Partly to change his thoughts, and partly from some inexplicable idea that had suddenly seized him, Don Cæsar continued—

"There is a strange old stump near the trail, and in it a hole. In the hole I found this letter." He stopped again—this time in alarm. Slinn had staggered to his feet with ashen and distorted features, and was glancing at the letter which Don Cæsar had drawn from his pocket. The muscles of his throat swelled as if he was swallowing; his lips moved, but no sound issued from them. At last, with a convulsive effort, he regained a disjointed speech, in a voice scarcely audible—

"My letter! My letter! It's mine! Give it me! It's my fortune—all mine! In the tunnel—hill! Masters stole it—stole my fortune! Stole it all! See, see!"

He seized the letter from Don Cæsar with trembling hands, and tore it open forcibly; a few dull yellow grains fell from it heavily, like shot, to the ground.

"See, it's true! My letter! My gold! My strike! My—my—my God!"

A tremor passed over his face. The hand that held the letter suddenly dropped sheer and heavy as the gold had fallen. The whole side of his face and body nearest Don Cæsar seemed to drop and sink into itself as suddenly. At the same moment, and without a word, he slipped through Don Cæsar's outstretched hands to the ground. Don Cæsar bent quickly over him, but not longer than to satisfy himself that he lived and breathed, although helpless. He then caught up the fallen letter, and, glancing over it with flashing eyes, thrust it and the few specimens in his pocket. He then sprang to his feet, so transformed with energy and intelligence that he seemed to have added the lost vitality of the man before him to his own. He glanced quickly up and down the highway. Every moment to him was precious now; but he could not leave the stricken man in the dust of the road; nor could he carry him to the house; nor, having alarmed his daughters, could he abandon his help-

lessness to their feeble arms. He remembered that his horse was still tied to the garden fence. He would fetch it, and carry the unfortunate man across the saddle to the gate. He lifted him with difficulty to the boulder, and ran rapidly up the road in the direction of his tethered steed. He had not proceeded far when he heard the noise of wheels behind him. It was the up stage coming furiously along. He would have called to the driver for assistance, but even through that fast sweeping cloud of dust and motion he could see that the man was utterly oblivious of anything but the speed of his rushing chariot, and had even risen in his box to lash the infuriated and frightened animals forward.

An hour later, when the coach drew up at the Red Dog Hotel, the driver descended from the box, white, but taciturn. When he had swallowed a glass of whisky at a single gulp, he turned to the astonished express agent who had followed him in.

"One of two things, Jim, hez got to happen," he said huskily. "Either that there rock hez got to get off the road, or *I* have. I've seed *him* on it agin!"

CHAPTER IV

No further particulars of the invalid's second attack were known than those furnished by Don Cæsar's brief statement, that he had found him lying insensible on the boulder. This seemed perfectly consistent with the theory of Dr. Duchesne, and as the young Spaniard left Los Gatos the next day, he escaped not only the active reporter of the *Record*, but the perusal of a grateful paragraph in the next day's paper recording his prompt kindness and courtesy. Dr. Duchesne's prognosis, however, seemed at fault; the

elder Slinn did not succumb to this second stroke, nor did he recover his reason. He apparently only relapsed into his former physical weakness, losing the little ground he had gained during the last month, and exhibiting no change in his mental condition, unless the fact that he remembered nothing of his seizure, and the presence of Don Cæsar, could be considered as favourable. Dr. Duchesne's gravity seemed to give that significance to this symptom, and his cross-questioning of the patient was characterised by more than his usual curtness.

"You are sure you don't remember walking in the garden before you were ill?" he said. "Come, think again. You must remember that." The old man's eyes wandered restlessly around the room, but he answered by a negative shake of his head. "And you don't remember sitting down on a stone by the road?"

The old man kept his eyes resolutely fixed on the bed-clothes before him.

"No!" he said, with a certain sharp decision that was new to him.

The doctor's eye brightened.

"All right, old man; then don't."

On his way out he took the eldest Miss Slinn aside.

"He'll do," he said grimly; "he's beginning to lie."

"Why, he only said he didn't remember," responded Esther.

"That was because he didn't want to remember," said the doctor authoritatively. "The brain is acting on some impression that is either painful and unpleasant, or so vague that he can't formulate it; he is conscious of it, and won't attempt it yet. It's a heap better than his old self-satisfied incoherency."

A few days later, when the fact of Slinn's identification with the paralytic of three years ago by the stage-

driver became generally known, the doctor came in quite jubilant.

"It's all plain now," he said decidedly. "That second stroke was caused by the nervous shock of his coming suddenly upon the very spot where he had the first one. It proved that his brain still retained old impressions, but as this first act of his memory was a painful one, the strain was too great. It was mighty unlucky; but it was a good sign."

"And you think, then——?" hesitated Harry Slinn.

"I think," said Dr. Duchesne, "that this activity still exists, and the proof of it, as I said before, is that he is trying now to forget it, and avoid thinking of it. You will find that he will fight shy of any allusion to it, and will be cunning enough to dodge it every time."

He certainly did. Whether the doctor's hypothesis was fairly based or not, it was a fact that, when he was first taken out to drive with his watchful physician, he apparently took no notice of the boulder—which still remained on the roadside, thanks to the later practical explanation of the stage-driver's vision—and curtly refused to talk about it. But, more significant to Duchesne, and perhaps more perplexing, was a certain morose abstraction, which took the place of his former vacuity of contentment, and an intolerance of his attendants, which supplanted his old habitual trustfulness to their care, that had been varied only by the occasional querulousness of an invalid. His daughters sometimes found him regarding them with an attention little short of suspicion, and even his son detected a half-suppressed aversion in his interviews with him.

Referring this among themselves to his unfortunate malady, his children, perhaps, justified this estrangement by paying very little attention to it. They were more pleasantly occupied. The two girls succeeded to the position held by Mamie Mulrady in the society of the neigh-

bourhood, and divided the attentions of Rough-and-Ready. The young editor of the *Record* had really achieved, through his supposed intimacy with the Mulradys, the good fortune he had jestingly prophesied. The disappearance of Don Caesar was regarded as a virtual abandonment of the field to his rival; and the general opinion was that he was engaged to the millionaire's daughter on a certain probation of work and influence in his prospective father-in-law's interests. He became successful in one or two speculations, the magic of the lucky Mulradys' name befriending him. In the superstition of the mining community, much of this luck was due to his having secured the old cabin.

"To think," remarked one of the augurs of Red Dog, French Pete, a polyglot jester, "that, while every d——d fool went to taking up claims where the gold had already been found, no one thought of stepping into the old man's old *choux* in the cabbage garden!"

Any doubt, however, of the alliance of the families was dissipated by the intimacy that sprang up between the elder Slinn and the millionaire, after the latter's return from San Francisco.

It began in a strange kind of pity for the physical weakness of the man, which enlisted the sympathies of Mulradys, whose great strength had never been deteriorated by the luxuries of wealth, and who was still able to set his workmen an example of hard labour; it was sustained by a singular and superstitious reverence for his mental condition, which, to the paternal Mulradys, seemed to possess that spiritual quality with which popular ignorance invests demented people.

"Then, you mean to say that during these three years the vein o' your mind, so to speak, was a lost lead, and sorter dropped out o' sight or follerin'?" queried Mulradys with infinite seriousness.

"Yes," returned Slinn, with less impatience than he usually showed to questions.

"And durin' that time, when you was dried up and waitin' for rain, I reckon you kinder had visions?"

A cloud passed over Slinn's face.

"Of course, of course!" said Mulrady, a little frightened at his tenacity in questioning the oracle. "Nat'rally, this was private, and not to be talked about. I meant, you had plenty of room for 'em without crowdin'; you kin tell me some day when you're better, and kin sorter select what's points and what ain't."

"Perhaps I may some day," said the invalid gloomily, glancing in the direction of his preoccupied daughters, "when we're alone."

When his physical strength had improved, and his left arm and side had regained a feeble but slowly gathering vitality, Alvin Mulrady one day surprised the family by bringing the convalescent a pile of letters and accounts, and spreading them on a board before Slinn's invalid chair, with the suggestion that he should look over, arrange, and docket them. The idea seemed preposterous, until it was found that the old man was actually able to perform this service, and exhibited a degree of intellectual activity and capacity for this kind of work that was unsuspected. Dr. Duchesne was delighted, and divided with admiration between his patient's progress and the millionaire's sagacity.

"And there are envious people," said the enthusiastic doctor, "who believe that a man like him, who could conceive of such a plan for occupying a weak intellect without taxing its memory or judgment, is merely a lucky fool! Look here. Maybe it didn't require much brains to stumble on a gold mine, and it is a gift of Providence. But, in my experience, Providence don't go round buyin' up d——d fools, or investin' in dead beats."

When Mr. Slinn, finally, with the aid of crutches, was able to hobble every day to the imposing counting-house and office of Mr. Mulrady, which now occupied the lower part of the new house, and contained some of its gorgeous furniture, he was installed at a rosewood desk behind Mr. Mulrady's chair, as his confidential clerk and private secretary. The astonishment of Red Dog and Rough-and-Ready at this singular innovation knew no bounds; but the boldness and novelty of the idea carried everything before it. Judge Butts, the oracle of Rough-and-Ready, delivered its decision.

"He's got a man who's physically incapable of running off with his money, and has no memory to run off with his ideas. How could he do better?"

Even his own son, Harry, coming upon his father thus installed, was for a moment struck with a certain filial respect, and for a day or two patronised him.

In this capacity Slinn became the confidant not only of Mulrady's business secrets, but of his domestic affairs. He knew that young Mulrady, from a freckle-faced, slow country boy, had developed into a freckle-faced, fast city man, with coarse habits of drink and gambling. It was through the old man's hands that extravagant bills and shameful claims passed on their way to be cashed by Mulrady; it was he that at last laid before the father one day his signature, perfectly forged by the son.

"Your eyes are not ez good ez mine, you know, Slinn," said Mulrady gravely. "It's all right. I sometimes make my y's like that. I'd clean forgot to enter that cheque. You must not think you've got the monopoly of disremembering," he added, with a faint laugh.

Equally through Slinn's hands passed the record of the lavish expenditure of Mrs. Mulrady and the fair Mamie, as well as the chronicle of their movements and fashionable

triumphs. As Mulrady had already noticed that Slinn had no confidence with his own family, he didn't try to withhold from him these domestic details, possibly as an offset to the dreary catalogue of his son's misdeeds, but more often in the hope of gaining from the taciturn old man some comment that might satisfy his innocent vanity as father and husband, and perhaps dissipate some doubts that were haunting him.

"Twelve hundred dollars looks to be a good figger for a dress, ain't it? But Malviny knows, I reckon, what ought to be worn at the Tooilleries, and she don't want our Mamie to take a back seat before them furrin princesses and gran' dukes. It's a slap-up affair, I kalkilate. Let's see. I disremember whether it's an emperor or a king that's rulin' over thar now. It must be suthin' first-class and AI, for Malviny ain't the woman to throw away twelve hundred dollars on any of them small-potato despots! She says Mamie speaks French already like them French Petes. I don't quite make out what she means here. She met Don Cæsar in Paris, and she says, 'I think Mamie is nearly off with Don Cæsar, who has followed her here. I don't care about her dropping him *too* suddenly; the reason I'll tell you hereafter. I think the man might be a dangerous enemy.' Now, what do you make of that? I allus thought Mamie rather cottoned to him, and it was the old woman who fought shy, thinkin' Mamie would do better. Now, I am agreeable that my gal should marry any one she likes, whether he's a dook or a poor man, as long as he's on the square. I was ready to take Don Cæsar, but now things seem to have shifted round. As to Don Cæsar's being a dangerous enemy if Mamie won't have him, that's a little too high and mighty for me, and I wonder the old woman don't make him climb down. What do you think?"

"Who is Don Cæsar?" asked Slinn.

"The man what picked you up that day. I mean," continued Mulrady, seeing the marks of evident ignorance on the old man's face, "I mean a sort of grave, genteel chap, suthin' between a parson and a circus rider. You might have seen him round the house talkin' to your gals."

But Slinn's entire forgetfulness of Don Cæsar was evidently unfeigned. Whatever sudden accession of memory he had at the time of his attack, the incident that caused it had no part in his recollection. With the exception of these rare intervals of domestic confidences with his crippled private secretary, Mulrady gave himself up to money-getting. Without any especial faculty for it—an easy prey often to unscrupulous financiers—his unfailing luck, however, carried him safely through, until his very mistakes seemed to be simply insignificant means to a large significant end and a part of his original plan. He sank another shaft, at a great expense, with a view to following the lead he had formerly found, against the opinions of the best mining engineers, and struck the artesian spring he did *not* find at that time, with a volume of water that enabled him not only to work his own mine, but to furnish supplies to his less fortunate neighbours at a vast profit. A league of tangled forest and cañon behind Rough-and-Ready, for which he had paid Don Ramon's heirs an extravagant price in the presumption that it was auriferous, furnished the most accessible timber to build the town, at prices which amply remunerated him. The practical schemes of experienced men, the wildest visions of daring dreams delayed or abortive for want of capital, eventually fell into his hands. Men sneered at his methods, but bought his shares. Some who affected to regard him simply as a man of money were content to get only his name to any enterprise. Courted by his superiors, quoted by his equals, and admired by his inferiors, he bore his elevation equally without ostentation or dignity. Bidden

to banquets, and forced by his position as director or president into the usual gastronomic feats of that civilisation and period, he partook of simple food, and continued his old habit of taking a cup of coffee with milk and sugar at dinner. Without professing temperance, he drank sparingly in a community where alcoholic stimulation was the custom. With neither refinement nor an extended vocabulary, he was seldom profane, and never indelicate. With nothing of the Puritan in his manner or conversation, he seemed to be as strange to the vices of civilisation as he was to its virtues. That such a man should offer little to, and receive little from, the companionship of women of any kind was a fore-gone conclusion. Without the dignity of solitude, he was pathetically alone.

Meantime, the days passed ; the first six months of his opulence were drawing to a close, and in that interval he had more than doubled the amount of his discovered fortune. The rainy season set in early. Although it dissipated the clouds of dust under which Nature and Art seemed to be slowly disappearing, it brought little beauty to the landscape at first, and only appeared to lay bare the crudenesses of civilisation. The unpainted wooden buildings of Rough-and-Ready, soaked and dripping with rain, took upon themselves a sleek and shining ugliness, as of second-hand garments ; the absence of cornices or projections to break the monotony of the long straight lines of downpour made the town appear as if it had been recently submerged, every vestige of ornamentation swept away, and only the bare outlines left. Mud was everywhere ! The outer soil seemed to have risen and invaded the houses even to their most secret recesses, as if outraged Nature was trying to revenge herself. Mud was brought into the saloons and bar-rooms and express-offices, on boots, on clothes, on baggage, and sometimes appeared mysteriously in splashes of red colour

on the walls, without visible conveyance. The dust of six months, closely packed in cornice and carving, yielded under the steady rain a thin yellow paint, that dropped on wayfarers or unexpectedly oozed out of ceilings and walls on the wretched inhabitants within. The outskirts of Rough-and-Ready, and the dried hills round Los Gatos, did not appear to fare much better; the new vegetation had not yet made much headway against the dead grasses of the summer; the pines in the hollow wept lugubriously into a small rivulet that had sprung suddenly into life near the old trail: everywhere was the sound of dropping, splashing, gurgling, or rushing waters.

More hideous than ever, the new Mulrady house listed itself against the leaden sky, and stared with all its large-framed, shutterless windows blankly on the prospect, until they seemed to the wayfarer to become mere mirrors set in the walls, reflecting only the watery landscape, and unable to give the least indication of light or heat within. Nevertheless, there was a fire in Mulrady's private office that December afternoon, of a smoky, intermittent variety, that sufficed more to record the defects of hasty architecture than to comfort the millionaire and his private secretary, who had lingered after the early withdrawal of the clerks. For the next day was Christmas, and, out of deference to the near approach of this festivity, a half-holiday had been given to the employés.

"They'll want, some of them, to spend their money before to-morrow; and others would like to be able to rise up comfortably drunk Christmas morning," the superintendent had suggested.

Mr. Mulrady had just signed a number of cheques indicating his largesse to those devoted adherents with the same unostentatious, undemonstrative, matter-of-fact manner that distinguished his ordinary business. The men had received it with something of the same manner.

A half-humorous "Thank you, sir"—as if to show that, with their patron, they tolerated this deference to a popular custom, but were a little ashamed of giving way to it—expressed their gratitude and their independence.

"I reckon that the old lady and Mamie are having a high old time in some of them gilded pallises, in St. Petersburg or Berlin, about this time. Them diamonds that I ordered at Tiffany ought to have reached 'em about now, so that Mamie could cut a swell at Christmas with her war-paint. I suppose it's the style to give presents in furrin countries ez it is here, and I allowed to the old lady that whatever she orders in that way she is to do in Californy style—no dollar jewellery and galvanised watches business. If she wants to make a present to any of them nobles ez has been purlite to her, it's got to be something that Rough-and-Ready ain't ashamed of. I showed you that pin Mamie bought me in Paris, didn't I? It's just come for my Christmas present. No! I reckon I put it in the safe, for them kind o' things don't suit my style; but 'spose I orter sport it to-morrow. It was mighty thoughtful in Mamie, and it must have cost a lump; it's got no slouch of a pearl in it. I wonder what Mamie gave for it?"

"You can easily tell; the bill is here. You paid it yesterday," said Slinn.

There was no satire in the man's voice, nor was there the least perception of irony in Mulrady's manner as he returned quietly—

"That's so; it was suthin' like a thousand francs; but French money, when you pan it out as dollars and cents, don't make so much, after all." There was a few moments' silence, when he continued in the same tone of voice: "Talkin' o' them things, Slinn, I've got suthin' for you." He stopped suddenly. Ever watchful of any undue excitement in the invalid, he had noticed a slight flush of dis-

turbance pass over his face, and continued carelessly : "But we'll talk over it to-morrow ; a day or two don't make much difference to you and me in such things, you know. P'raps I'll drop in and see you. We'll be shut up here."

"Then, you're going out somewhere?" asked Slinn mechanically.

"No," said Mulrady hesitatingly. It had suddenly occurred to him that he had nowhere to go if he wanted to, and he continued, half in explanation, "I ain't reckoned much on Christmas, myself. Abner's at the Springs ; it wouldn't pay him to come here for a day—even if there was anybody here he cared to see. I reckon I'll hang round the shanty and look after things generally. I haven't been over the house upstairs to put things right since the folks left. But *you* needn't come here, you know."

He helped the old man to rise, assisted him in putting on his overcoat, and then handed him the cane which had lately replaced his crutches.

"Good-bye, old man ! You mustn't trouble yourself to say 'Merry Christmas' now, but wait until you see me again. Take care of yourself."

He slapped him lightly on the shoulder, and went back into his private office. He worked for some time at his desk, and then laid his pen aside, put away his papers methodically, placing a large envelope on his private secretary's vacant table. He then opened the office door and ascended the staircase. He stopped on the first landing to listen to the sound of rain on the glass skylight, that seemed to echo through the empty hall like the gloomy roll of a drum.

It was evident that the searching water had found out the secret sins of the house's construction, for there were great fissures of discoloration in the white and gold paper in the corners of the wall. There was a strange odour of the dank forest in the mirrored drawing-room, as if the rain had

brought out the sap again from the unseasoned timbers ; the blue and white satin furniture looked cold, and the marble mantels and centre tables had taken upon themselves the clamminess of tombstones.

Mr. Mulrady, who had always retained his old farmer-like habit of taking off his coat with his hat on entering his own house, and appearing in his shirt-sleeves, to indicate domestic ease and security, was obliged to replace it, on account of the chill. He had never felt at home in this room. Its strangeness had lately been heightened by Mrs. Mulrady's purchase of a family portrait of some one she didn't know, but who, she had alleged, resembled her "Uncle Bob," which hung on the wall beside some paintings in massive frames.

Mr. Mulrady cast a hurried glance at the portrait that, on the strength of a high coat-collar and high top curl—both rolled with equal precision and singular sameness of colour—had always glared at Mulrady as if *he* was the intruder ; and passing through his wife's gorgeous bedroom, entered the little dressing-room, where he still slept on the smallest of cots, with hastily improvised surroundings, as if he was a bailiff in possession.

He didn't linger here long, but, taking a key from a drawer, continued up the staircase, to the ominous funeral marches of the beating rain on the skylight, and paused on the landing to glance into his son's and daughter's bedrooms, duplicates of the bizarre extravagance below. If he were seeking some characteristic traces of his absent family, they certainly were not here in the painted and still damp blazoning of their later successes. He ascended another staircase, and, passing to the wing of the house, paused before a small door, which was locked. Already the ostentatious decorations of wall and passages were left behind, and the plain lath-and-plaster partition of the attic lay before him. He unlocked the door and threw it open.

CHAPTER V.

THE apartment he entered was really only a lumber-room or loft over the wing of the house, which had been left bare and unfinished, and which revealed in its meagre skeleton of beams and joints the hollow sham of the whole structure. But in more violent contrast to the fresher glories of the other part of the house were its contents, which were the heterogeneous collection of old furniture, old luggage, and cast-off clothing, left over from the past life in the old cabin. It was a much plainer record of the simple beginnings of the family than Mrs. Mulrady cared to have remaining in evidence, and for that reason it had been relegated to the hidden recesses of the new house, in the hope that it might absorb or digest it.

There were old cribs in which the infant limbs of Mamie and Abner had been tucked up; old looking-glasses that had reflected their shining soapy faces, and Mamie's best chip Sunday hat; an old sewing-machine, that had been worn out in active service; old patch-work quilts; an old accordion, to whose long-drawn inspirations Mamie had sung hymns; old pictures, books, and old toys. There were one or two old chromos, and, stuck in an old frame, a coloured print from the *Illustrated London News* of a Christmas gathering in an old English country house. He stopped and picked up this print, which he had often seen before, gazing at it with a new and singular interest. He wondered if Mamie had seen anything of this kind in England, and why couldn't he have had something like it here, in their own fine house, with themselves and a few friends? He remembered a past Christmas, when he had bought Mamie that now headless doll with the few coins

that were left him after buying their frugal Christmas dinner. There was an old spotted hobby-horse that another Christmas had brought to Abner. Abner, who would be driving a fast trotter to-morrow at the Springs! How everything had changed! How they had all got up in the world, and how far beyond this kind of thing—and yet—yet it would have been rather comfortable to have all been together again here. Would *they* have been more comfortable? No! Yet, then he might have had something to do, and been less lonely to-morrow. What of that? He *had* something to do: to look after this immense fortune. What more could a man want? or should he want? It was rather mean in him, able to give his wife and children everything they wanted, to be wanting anything more. He laid down the print gently, after dusting its glass and frame with his silk handkerchief, and slowly left the room.

The drum-beat of the rain followed him down the staircase, but he shut it out with his other thoughts, when he again closed the door of his office. He sat diligently to work by the declining winter light until he was interrupted by the entrance of his Chinese waiter to tell him that supper—which was the meal that Mulrady religiously adhered to in place of the late dinner of civilisation—was ready in the dining-room. Mulrady mechanically obeyed the summons; but on entering the room, the oasis of a few plates in a desert of white table-cloth which awaited him made him hesitate. In its best aspect, the high dark Gothic mahogany ecclesiastical sideboard and chairs of this room, which looked like the appointments of a mortuary chapel, were not exhilarating; and to-day, in the light of the rain-filmed windows and the feeble rays of a lamp half obscured by the dark, shining walls, it was most depressing.

“You kin take up supper into my office,” said Mulrady, with a sudden inspiration. “I’ll eat it there.”

He ate it there with his usual healthy appetite, which did not require even the stimulation of company. He had just finished, when his Irish cook—the one female servant of the house—came to ask permission to be absent that evening and the next day.

"I suppose the likes of your honour won't be at home on the Christmas Day? And it's me cousins from the old counthry at Rough-and-Ready that are invitin' me."

"Why don't you ask them over here?" said Mulrady, with another vague inspiration. "I'll stand treat."

"Lord preserve you for a jinerous gintleman! But it's the likes of them and myself that wouldn't be at home here on such a day."

There was so much truth in this that Mulrady checked a sigh as he gave the required permission, without saying that he had intended to remain. He could cook his own breakfast; he had done it before; and it would be something to occupy him. As to his dinner, perhaps he could go to the hotel at Rough-and-Ready. He worked on until the night had well advanced. Then, overcome with a certain restlessness that disturbed him, he was forced to put his books and papers away. It had begun to blow in fitful gusts, and occasionally the rain was driven softly across the panes like the passing of childish fingers. This disturbed him more than the monotony of silence, for he was not a nervous man. He seldom read a book, and the county paper furnished him only the financial and mercantile news, which was part of his business. He knew he could not sleep if he went to bed. At last he rose, opened the window, and looked out from pure idleness of occupation. A splash of wheels in the distant muddy road and fragments of a drunken song showed signs of an early wandering reveller. There were no lights to be seen at the closed works; a profound darkness encompassed the house, as if the distant

pines in the hollow had moved up and round. The silence was broken now only by the occasional sighing of wind and rain. It was not an inviting night for a perfunctory walk ; but an idea struck him—he would call upon the Slinns, and anticipate his next day's visit ! They would probably have company, and be glad to see him ; he could tell the girls of Mamie and her success. That he had not thought of this before was a proof of his usual self-contained isolation ; that he thought of it now was an equal proof that he was becoming at least accessible to loneliness. He was angry with himself for what seemed to him a selfish weakness.

He returned to his office, and putting the envelope that had been lying on Slinn's desk in his pocket, threw a serape over his shoulders, and locked the front-door of the house behind him. It was well that the way was a familiar one to him, and that his feet instinctively found the trail, for the night was very dark. At times he was warned only by the gurgling of water of little rivulets that descended the hill and crossed his path. Without the slightest fear, and with neither imagination nor sensitiveness, he recalled how, the winter before, one of Don Cæsar's vaqueros, crossing this hill at night, had fallen down the chasm of a landslip caused by the rain, and was found the next morning with his neck broken in the gully. Don Cæsar had to take care of the man's family. Suppose such an accident should happen to him ? Well, he had made his will. His wife and children would be provided for, and the work of the mine would go on all the same ; he had arranged for that. Would anybody miss him ? Would his wife, or his son, or his daughter ? No ! He felt such a sudden and overwhelming conviction of the truth of this, that he stopped as suddenly as if the chasm had opened before him. No ! It was the truth. If he were to disappear for ever in the darkness of the Christmas night, there was none to feel his

loss. His wife would take care of Mamie; his son would take care of himself as he had before—relieved of even the scant paternal authority he rebelled against. A more imaginative man than Mulrady would have combated or have followed out this idea, and then dismissed it; to the millionaire's matter-of-fact mind it was a deduction that, having once presented itself to his perception, was already a recognised fact. For the first time in his life he felt a sudden instinct of something like aversion towards his family, a feeling that even his son's dissipation and criminality had never provoked. He hurried on angrily through the darkness.

It was very strange; the old house should be almost before him now, across the hollow, yet there were no indications of light! It was not until he actually reached the garden-fence, and the black bulk of shadow rose out against the sky, that he saw a faint ray of light from one of the lean-to windows. He went to the front-door and knocked. After waiting in vain for a reply, he knocked again. The second knock proving equally futile, he tried the door; it was unlocked, and, pushing it open, he walked in.

The narrow passage was quite dark, but from his knowledge of the house he knew the "lean-to" was next to the kitchen, and, passing through the dining-room into it, he opened the door of the little room from which the light proceeded. It came from a single candle on a small table, and beside it, with his eyes moodily fixed on the dying embers of the fire, sat old Slinn. There was no other light nor another human being in the whole house.

For the instant Mulrady, forgetting his own feelings in the mute picture of the utter desolation of the helpless man, remained speechless on the threshold. Then, recalling himself, he stepped forward and laid his hand gaily on the bowed shoulders.

"Rouse up out o' this, old man! Come, this won't do! Look! I've run over here in the rain jist to have a sociable time with you all."

"I knew it," said the old man, without looking up; "I knew you'd come."

"You knew I'd come?" echoed Mulrady, with an uneasy return of the same strange feeling of awe with which he regarded Slinn's abstraction.

"Yes; you were alone—like myself—all alone!"

"Then, why in thunder didn't you open the door or sing out just now?" said Mulrady, with an affected brusquerie to cover his uneasiness. "Where's your daughters?"

"Gone to Rough-and-Ready to a party."

"And your son?"

"He never comes here when he can amuse himself elsewhere."

"Your children might have stayed home on Christmas Eve."

"So might yours."

He didn't say this impatiently, but with a certain abstracted conviction far beyond any suggestion of its being a retort. Mulrady did not appear to notice it.

"Well, I don't see why us old folks can't enjoy ourselves without them," said Mulrady with affected cheerfulness. "Let's have a good time, you and me. Let's see, you haven't any one you can send to my house, hev you?"

"They took the servant with them," said Slinn briefly. "There is no one here."

"All right," said the millionaire briskly. "I'll go myself. Do you think you could manage to light up a little more, and build a fire in the kitchen while I am gone? It used to be mighty comfortable in the old times."

He helped the old man to rise from his chair, and

seemed to have infused into him some of his own energy. He then added—

"Now, don't you get yourself down again into that chair until I come back," and darted out into the night once more.

In a quarter of an hour he returned with a bag on his broad shoulders, which one of his porters would have shrunk from lifting, and laid it before the blazing hearth of the now lighted kitchen.

"It's something the old woman got for her party that didn't come off," he said apologetically. "I reckon we can pick out enough for a spread. That darned Chinaman wouldn't come with me," he added, with a laugh, "because, he said, he'd knocked off work 'alle the same, Mellican man!' Look here, Slinn," he said with a sudden decisiveness, "my pay-roll of the men around here don't run short of a hundred and fifty dollars a day, and yet I couldn't get a hand to help me bring this truck over for my Christmas dinner."

"Of course," said Slinn gloomily.

"Of course; so it oughter be," returned Mulrady shortly. "Why, its only their one day out of three hundred and sixty-five; and I can have three hundred and sixty-four days off, as I am their boss. I don't mind a man's being independent," he continued, taking off his coat and beginning to unpack his sack—a common "gunny bag," used for potatoes. "We're independent ourselves, ain't we, Slinn?"

His good spirits, which had been at first laboured and affected, had become natural. Slinn, looking at his brightened eye and fresher colour, could not help thinking he was more like his old real self at this moment than in his counting-house and offices—with all his simplicity as a capitalist. A less abstracted and more observant critic than Slinn would have seen in this patient aptitude for real work, and the recognition of the force of petty detail, the

dominance of the old market-gardener in his former humble, as well as his later more ambitious successes.

"Heaven keep us from being dependent upon our children!" said Slinn darkly.

"Let the young ones alone to-night; we can get along without them, as they can without us," said Mulrady, with a slight twinge as he thought of his reflections on the hill-side. "But look here, there's some champagne, and them sweet cordials that women like; there's jellies and such like stuff, about as good as they make 'em, I reckon; and preserves, and tongues, and spiced beef—take your pick! Stop, let's spread them out."

He dragged the table to the middle of the floor, and piled the provisions upon it. They certainly were not deficient in quality or quantity.

"Now, Slinn, wade in."

"I don't feel hungry," said the invalid, who had lapsed again into a chair before the fire.

"No more do I," said Mulrady; "but I reckon it's the right thing to do about this time. Some folks think they can't be happy without they're getting outside o' suthin', and my directors down at Frisco can't do any business without a dinner. Take some champagne, to begin with."

He opened a bottle, and filled two tumblers.

"It's past twelve o'clock, old man, so here's a merry Christmas to you, and both of us ez is here. And here's another to our families—ez isn't."

They both drank their wine stolidly. The rain beat against the windows sharply, but without the hollow echoes of the house on the hill.

"I must write to the old woman and Mamie, and say that you and me had a high old time on Christmas Eve."

"By ourselves," added the invalid.

Mr. Mulrady coughed.

"Nat'rally—by ourselves. And her provisions," he added, with a laugh. "We're really beholden to *her* for 'em. If she hadn't thought of having them—"

"For somebody else, you wouldn't have had them—would you?" said Slinn slowly, gazing at the fire.

"No," said Mulrady dubiously.

After a pause, he began more vivaciously, and as if to shake off some disagreeable thought that was impressing him—

"But I mustn't forget to give you *your* Christmas, old man, and I've got it right here with me." He took the folded envelope from his pocket, and, holding it in his hand, with his elbow on the table, continued: "I don't mind telling you what idea I had in giving you what I'm goin' to give you now. I've been thinking about it for a day or two. A man like you don't want money—you wouldn't spend it. A man like you don't want stocks or fancy investments, for you couldn't look after them. A man like you don't want diamonds and jewellery, nor a gold-headed cane, when it's got to be used as a crutch. No, sir. What you want is suthin' that won't run away from you; that is always there before you, and won't wear out, and will last after you're gone. That's land! And, if it wasn't that I have sworn never to sell or give away this house and that garden; if it wasn't that I've held out agin the old woman and Mamie on that point, you should have *this* house and *that* garden. But, mebbe for the same reason that I've told you, I want that land to keep for myself. But I've selected four acres of the hill this side of my shaft, and here's the deed of it. As soon as you're ready, I'll put you up a house as big as this—that shall be yours with the land as long as you live, old man, and after that your children's."

"No, not theirs!" broke in the old man passionately. "Never!"

Mulrady recoiled for an instant in alarm at the sudden and unexpected vehemence of his manner.

"Go slow, old man, go slow," he said soothingly. "Of course, you'll do with your own as you like." Then, as if changing the subject, he went on cheerfully: "Perhaps you'll wonder why I picked out that spot on the hillside. Well, first, because I reserved it after my strike in case the lead should run that way, but it didn't. Next, because when you first came here you seemed to like the prospect. You used to sit there looking at it, as if it reminded you of something. You never said it did. They say you was sitting on that boulder there when you had that last attack, you know; but," he added gently, "you've forgotten all about it."

"I have forgotten nothing," said Slinn, rising, with a choking voice. "I wish to God I had! I wish to God I could!"

He was on his feet now, supporting himself by the table. The subtle, generous liquor he had drunk had evidently shaken his self-control, and burst those voluntary bonds he had put upon himself for the last six months: the insidious stimulant had also put a strange vigour into his blood and nerves. His face was flushed, but not distorted; his eyes were brilliant, but not fixed. He looked as he might have looked to Masters in his strength three years before on that very hillside.

"Listen to me, Alvin Mulrady," he said, leaning over him with burning eyes. "Listen, while I have brain to think and strength to utter, why I have learnt to distrust, fear, and hate them! You think you know my story. Well, hear the truth from *me*, to-night, Alvin Mulrady, and do not wonder if I have cause."

He stopped, and, with pathetic inefficiency, passed the fingers and inward turned thumb of his paralysed hand across his mouth, as if to calm himself.

"Three years ago I was a miner, but not a miner like you. I had experience ; I had scientific knowledge ; I had a theory, and the patience and energy to carry it out. I selected a spot that had all the indications, made a tunnel, and, without aid, counsel, or assistance of any kind, worked it for six months, without rest or cessation, and with scarcely food enough to sustain my body. Well, I made a strike ; not like you, Mulrady : not a blunder of good luck, a fool's fortune—there, I don't blame you for it—but in perfect demonstration of my theory, the reward of my labour. It was no pocket, but a vein, a lead, that I had regularly hunted down and found—a fortune !

"I never knew how hard I had worked until that morning. I never knew what privations I had undergone until that moment of my success, when I found I could scarcely think or move. I staggered out into the open air. The only human soul near me was a disappointed prospector, a man named Masters, who had a tunnel not far away. I managed to conceal from him my good fortune and my feeble state, for I was suspicious of him—of any one—and as he was going away that day, I thought I could keep my secret until he was gone. I was dizzy and confused, but I remember that I managed to write a letter to my wife, telling her of my good fortune, and begging her to come to me ; and I remember that I saw Masters go. I don't remember anything else. They picked me up on the road, near that boulder, as you know."

"I know," said Mulrady, with a swift recollection of the stage-driver's account of his discovery.

"They say," continued Slinn tremblingly, "that I never recovered my senses or consciousness for nearly three years ; they say I lost my memory completely during my illness, and that, by God's mercy, while I lay in that hospital, I knew no more than a babe ; they say that because I could

not speak or move, and only had my food as nature required it, that I was an imbecile, and that I never really came to my senses until after my son found me in the hospital. They *say* that: but I tell you to-night, Alvin Mulrady," he said, raising his voice to a hoarse outcry—"I tell you that it is a lie! I came to my senses a week after I lay on that hospital cot. I kept my senses and memory ever after, during the three years that I was there, until Harry brought his cold, hypocritical face to my bedside and recognised me. Do you understand? I, the possessor of millions, lay there a pauper! Deserted by wife and children—a spectacle for the curious, a sport for the doctors—*and I knew it!* I heard them speculate on the cause of my helplessness. I heard them talk of excesses and indulgences; I, that never knew wine or woman! I heard a preacher speak of the finger of God, and point to me—may God curse him!"

"Go slow, old man—go slow," said Mulrady gently.

"I heard them speak of me as a friendless man, an outcast, a criminal—a being whom no one would claim. They were right; no one claimed me. The friends of others visited them; relations came and took away their kindred; a few lucky ones got well; a few, equally lucky, died. I alone lived on, uncared for, deserted.

"The first year," he went on more rapidly, "I prayed for their coming. I looked for them every day. I never lost hope. I said to myself, 'She has not got my letter; but when the time passes she will be alarmed by my silence, and then she will come or send some one to seek me.' A young student got interested in my case, and, by studying my eyes, thought that I was not entirely imbecile and unconscious. With the aid of an alphabet he got me to spell my name and town in Illinois, and promised by signs to write to my family. But in an evil moment I told him of my cursed fortune, and in that moment I saw that he

thought me a fool and an idiot. He went away, and I saw him no more. Yet I still hoped. I dreamed of their joy at finding me, and the reward that my wealth would give them. Perhaps I was a little weak still, perhaps a little slighty, too, at times ; but I was quite happy that year, even in my disappointment ; for I had still hope."

He paused, and again composed his face with his paralysed hand ; but his manner had become less excited, and his voice was stronger.

"A change must have come over me the second year, for I only dreaded their coming now and finding me so altered. A horrible idea that they might, like the student, believe me crazy if I spoke of my fortune, made me pray to God that they might not reach me until after I had regained my health and strength, and found my fortune. When the third year found me still there, I no longer prayed for them—I cursed them. I swore to myself that they should never enjoy my wealth ; but I wanted to live, and let them know I had it. I found myself getting stronger ; but as I had no money, no friends, and nowhere to go, I concealed my real condition from the doctors, except to give them my name, and to try to get some little work to do to enable me to leave the hospital and seek my lost treasure. One day I found out by accident that it had been discovered. You understand ?—my treasure!—that had cost me years of labour and my reason ; had left me a helpless, forgotten pauper. That gold I had never enjoyed had been found and taken possession of by another!"

He checked an exclamation from Mulrady with his hand.

"They say they picked me up senseless from the floor, where I must have fallen when I heard the news. I don't remember. I recall nothing until I was confronted nearly

three weeks after by my son, who had called at the hospital as a reporter for a paper, and had accidentally discovered me through my name and appearance. He thought me crazy, or a fool. I didn't undeceive him. I did not tell him the story of the mine to excite his doubts and derision, or worse—if I could bring proof to claim it—have it perhaps pass into his ungrateful hands. No; I said nothing. I let him bring me here. He could do no less, and common decency obliged him to do that."

"And what proof could you show of your claim?" asked Mulrady gravely.

"If I had that letter, if I could find Masters," began Slinn vaguely.

"Have you any idea where the letter is, or what has become of Masters?" continued Mulrady, with a matter-of-fact gravity that seemed to increase Slinn's vagueness and excite his irritability.

"I don't know—I sometimes think——"

He stopped, sat down, and again passed his hands across his forehead.

"I have seen the letter somewhere since. Yes," he went on with sudden vehemence, "I know it, I have seen it! I——"

His brow knitted, his features began to work convulsively; he suddenly brought his paralysed hand down partly opened upon the table.

"I *will* remember where."

"Go slow, old man—go slow."

"You asked me once about my visions. Well, that is one of them. I remember a man somewhere showing me that letter. I took it from his hands and opened it, and knew it was mine by the specimens of gold that were in it. But where—or when—or what became of it, I cannot tell. It will come to me—it *must* come to me soon."

He turned his eyes upon Mulrady, who was regarding him with an expression of grave curiosity, and said bitterly—

"You think me crazy. I know it. It needed only this."

"Where is this mine?" asked Mulrady, without heeding him.

The old man's eyes swiftly sought the ground.

"It is a secret then?"

"No."

"You have spoken of it to some one?"

"No."

"Not to the man who possesses it?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I wouldn't take it from him."

"Why wouldn't you?"

"Because that man is yourself!"

In the instant of complete silence that followed they could hear that the monotonous patter of rain on the roof had ceased.

"Then all this was in *my* shaft, and the vein I thought I struck there was *your* lead, found three years ago in *your* tunnel. Is that your idea?"

"Yes."

"Then I don't *sabe* why you don't want to claim it."

"I have told you why I don't want it for my children. I go further now, and I tell you, Alvin Mulrady, that I was willing that your children should squander it, as they were doing. It has only been a curse to me; it could only be a curse to them; but I thought you were happy in seeing it feed selfishness and vanity. You think me bitter and hard. Well, I should have left you in your fool's paradise, but that I saw to-night when you came here that your eyes had been opened like mine. You, the possessor of my wealth—my treasure—could not buy your children's

loving care and company with your millions, any more than I could keep mine in poverty. You were to-night lonely and forsaken, as I was. We were equal for the first time in our lives. If that cursed gold had dropped down the shaft between us into the hell from which it sprang, we might have clasped hands like brothers across the chasm."

Mulrady, who in a friendly show of being at his ease had not yet resumed his coat, rose in his shirt-sleeves, and, standing before the hearth, straightened his square figure by drawing down his waistcoat on each side with two powerful thumbs. After a moment's contemplative survey of the floor between him and the speaker, he raised his eyes to Slinn. They were small and colourless; the forehead above them was low, and crowned with a shock of tawny reddish hair; even the rude strength of his lower features was enfeebled by a long straggling goat-like beard; but for the first time in his life the whole face was impressed and transformed with a strong and simple dignity.

"Ez far ez I kin see, Slinn," he said gravely, "the p'int between you and me ain't to be settled by our children, or wot we allow is doo and right from them to us. Afore we preach at them for playing in the slumgullion, and gettin' themselves splashed, perhaps we mout as well remember that that thar slumgullion comes from our own sluice-boxes, where we wash our gold. So we'll just put *them* behind us, so," he continued, with a backward sweep of his powerful hand towards the chimney, and went on: "The next thing that crops up ahead of us, is your three years in the hospital, and wot you went through at that time. I ain't sayin' it wasn't rough on you, and that you didn't have it about as big as it's made; but ez you'll allow that you'd hev had that for three years, whether I'd found your mine or whether I hadn't, I think we can put *that* behind us, too. There's nothin' now left to prospect but

your story of your strike. Well, take your own proofs. Masters is not here; and if he was, according to your own story, he knows nothin' of your strike that day, and could only prove you were a disappointed prospector in a tunnel; your letter—that the person you wrote to never got—you can't produce; and if you did, would be only your own story without proof! There is not a business man ez would look at your claim; there isn't a friend of yours that wouldn't believe you were crazy, and dreamed it all; there's isn't a rival of yours ez wouldn't say cz you'd invented it. Slinn, I'm a business man—I am your friend—I am your rival—but I don't think you're lyin'—I don't think you're crazy—and I'm not sure your claim ain't a good one! Ef you reckon from that that I'm going to hand you over the mine to-morrow," he went on after a pause, raising his hand with a deprecating gesture, "you're mistaken. For your own sake, and the sake of your wife and children, you've got to prove it more clearly than you hev; but I promise you that from this night forward I will spare neither time nor money to help you to do it. I have more than doubled the amount that you would have had had you taken the mine the day you came from the hospital. When you prove to me that your story is true—and we will find some way to prove it, if it *is* true, that amount will be yours at once, without the need of a word from law or lawyers. If you want my name to that in black and white, come to the office to-morrow, and you shall have it."

"And you think I'll take it now?" said the old man passionately. "Do you think that your charity will bring back my dead wife, the three years of my lost life, the love and respect of my children? Or do you think that your own wife and children, who deserted you in your wealth, will come back to you in your poverty? No! Let the mine stay with its curse where it is—I'll have none of it!"

"Go slow, old man; go slow," said Mulrady quietly, putting on his coat. "You will take the mine if it is yours; if it isn't, I'll keep it. If it is yours, you will give your children a chance to show what they can do for you in your sudden prosperity, as I shall give mine a chance to show how they can stand reverse and disappointment. If my head is level—and I reckon it is—they'll both 'pan out all right."

He turned and opened the door. With a quick revulsion of feeling Slinn suddenly seized Mulrady's hand between both his own, and raised it to his lips. Mulrady smiled, disengaged his hand gently, and saying soothingly, "Go slow, old man; go slow," closed the door behind him, and passed out into the clear Christmas dawn.

For the stars, with the exception of one that seemed to sparkle brightly over the shaft of his former fortunes, were slowly paling. A burden seemed to have fallen from his square shoulders as he stepped out sturdily in the morning air. He had already forgotten the lonely man behind him, for he was thinking only of his wife and daughter. And at the same moment they were thinking of him; and in their elaborate villa overlooking the blue Mediterranean at Cannes, were discussing, in the event of Mamie's marriage with Prince Rosso e Negro, the possibility of Mr. Mulrady's paying two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the gambling debts of that unfortunate but deeply conscientious nobleman.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Alvin Mulrady re-entered his own house, he no longer noticed its loneliness. Whether the events of the last few hours had driven it from his mind, or whether his late reflections had repeopled it with his family under

pleasanter auspices, it would be difficult to determine. Destitute as he was of imagination, and matter-of-fact in his judgments, he realised his new situation as calmly as he would have considered any business proposition. While he was decided to act upon his moral convictions purely, he was prepared to submit the facts of Slinn's claim to the usual patient and laborious investigation of his practical mind. It was the least he could do to justify the ready and almost superstitious assent he had given to Slinn's story.

When he had made a few memoranda at his desk by the growing light, he again took the key of the attic, and ascended to the loft that held the tangible memories of his past life. If he was still under the influence of his reflections, it was with very different sensations that he now regarded them. Was it possible that these ashes might be warmed again, and these scattered embers rekindled? His practical sense said, No! whatever his wish might have been. A sudden chill came over him: he began to realise the terrible change that was probable, more by the impossibility of his accepting the old order of things, than by his voluntarily abandoning the new. His wife and children would never submit. They would go away from this place—far away, where no reminiscence of either former wealth or former poverty could obtrude itself upon them. Mamie—his Mamie—should never go back to the cabin, since desecrated by Slinn's daughters, and take their places. No! Why should she?—because of the half-sick, half-crazy dreams of an old vindictive man?

He stopped suddenly. In moodily turning over a heap of mining clothing, blankets, and india-rubber boots, he had come upon an old pickaxe—the one he had found in the shaft; the one he had carefully preserved for a year, and then forgotten. Why had he not remembered it before? He was frightened, not only at this sudden resur-

rection of the proof he was seeking, but at his own fateful forgetfulness. Why had he never thought of this when Slinn was speaking? A sense of shame, as if he had voluntarily withheld it from the wronged man, swept over him. He was turning away, when he was again startled.

This time it was by a voice below—a voice calling him—Slinn's voice. How had the crippled man got here so soon, and what did he want? He hurriedly laid aside the pick, which in his first impulse he had taken to the door of the lost with him, and descended the stairs. The old man was standing at the door of his office awaiting him.

As Mulrady approached he trembled violently, and clung to the doorpost for support.

"I had to come over, Mulrady," he said, in a choked voice; "I could stand it there no longer. I've come to beg you to forget all that I have said; to drive all thought of what passed between us last night out of your head and mine for ever. I've come to ask you to swear with me that neither of us will ever speak of this again for ever. It is not worth the happiness I have had in your friendship for the last half-year; it is not worth the agony I have suffered in its loss in the last half-hour."

Mulrady grasped his outstretched hand.

"P'raps," he said gravely, "there mayn't be any use for another word, if you can answer one now. Come with me. No matter," he added, as Slinn moved with difficulty; "I will help you."

He half supported, half lifted the paralysed man up the three flights of stairs, and opened the door of the lost. The pick was leaning against the wall where he had left it.

"Look around, and see if you recognise anything."

The old man's eyes fell upon the implement in a half-frightened way, and then lifted themselves interrogatively to Mulrady's face.

"Do you know that pick?"

Slinn raised it in his trembling hands.

"I think I do; and yet——"

"Slinn, is it yours?"

"No," he said hurriedly.

"Then what makes you think you know it?"

"It has a short handle like one I've seen."

"And it isn't yours?"

"No. The handle of mine was broken and spliced. I was too poor to buy a new one."

"Then, you say that this pick which I found in my shaft is not yours?"

"Yes."

"Slinn!"

The old man passed his hand across his forehead, looked at Mulrady, and dropped his eyes.

"It is not mine," he said simply.

"That will do," said Mulrady gravely.

"And you will not speak of this again?" said the old man timidly.

"I promise you—not until I have some more evidence."

He kept his word, but not before he had extorted from Slinn as full a description of Masters as his imperfect memory and still more imperfect knowledge of his former neighbour could furnish. He placed this with a large sum of money, and the promise of a still larger reward, in the hands of a trustworthy agent. When this was done he resumed his old relations with Slinn, with the exception that the domestic letters of Mrs. Mulrady and Mamie were no longer a subject of comment, and their bills no longer passed through his private secretary's hands.

Three months passed; the rainy season had ceased, the hillsides around Mulrady's shaft were bridal-like with flowers; indeed, there were rumours of an approaching

fashionable marriage in the air, and vague hints in the *Record* that the presence of a distinguished capitalist might soon be required abroad. The face of that distinguished man did not, however, reflect the gaiety of nature nor the anticipation of happiness ; on the contrary, for the past few weeks he had appeared disturbed and anxious, and that rude tranquillity which had characterised him was wanting. People shook their heads ; a few suggested speculations ; all agreed on extravagance.

One morning, after office hours, Slinn, who had been watching the careworn face of his employer, suddenly rose and limped to his side.

"We promised each other," he said, in a voice trembling with emotion, "never to allude to our talk of Christmas Eve again, unless we had other proofs of what I told you then. We have none ; I don't believe we'll ever have any more ; I don't care if we ever do, and I break that promise now because I cannot bear to see you unhappy and know that this is the cause."

Mulrady made a motion of deprecation, but the old man continued—

"You are unhappy, Alvin Mulrady. You are unhappy because you want to give your daughter a dowry of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and you will not use the fortune that you think may be mine."

"Who's been talking about a dowry ?" asked Mulrady, with an angry flush.

"Don Cæsar Alvarado told my daughter."

"Then that is why he has thrown off on me since he returned," said Mulrady, with sudden small malevolence—"just that he might unload his gossip because Mamie wouldn't have him. The old woman was right in warnin' me agin him."

The outburst was so unlike him, and so dwarfed his large

though common nature with its littleness, that it was easy to detect its feminine origin, although it filled Slinn with vague alarm.

"Never mind him," said the old man hastily; "what I wanted to say now is that I abandon everything to you and yours. There are no proofs; there never will be any more than what we know—than what we have tested and found wanting. I swear to you that, except to show you that I have not lied and am not crazy, I would destroy them on their way to your hands. Keep the money, and spend it as you will. Make your daughter happy, and, through her, yourself. You have made me happy through your liberality, don't make me suffer through your privation."

"I tell you what, old man," said Mulrady, rising to his feet, with an awkward mingling of frankness and shame in his manner and accent, "I should like to pay that money for Mamie, and let her be a princess, if it would make her happy. I should like to shut the lantern jaws of that Don Cæsar, who'd be too glad if anything happened to break off Mamie's match, but I shouldn't touch that capital—unless you'd lend it to me. If you'll take a note from me, payable if the property ever becomes yours, I'd thank you. A mortgage on the old house and garden, and the lands I bought of Don Cæsar, outside the mine, will secure you."

"If that pleases you," said the old man, with a smile, "have your way; and if I tear up the note, it does not concern you."

It did please the distinguished capitalist of Rough-and-Ready; for the next few days his face wore a brightened expression, and he seemed to have recovered his old tranquillity. There was, in fact, a slight touch of consequence in his manner, the first ostentation he had ever indulged in, when he was informed one morning at his private office that

Don Cæsar Alvarado was in the counting-house, desiring a few moments' conference.

"Tell him to come in," said Mulrady shortly.

The door opened upon Don Cæsar, erect, sallow, and grave. Mulrady had not seen him since his return from Europe, and even his inexperienced eyes were struck with the undeniable ease and grace with which the young Spanish-American had assimilated the style and fashion of an older civilisation. It seemed rather as if he had returned to a familiar condition than adopted a new one.

"Take a cheer," said Mulrady.

The young man looked at Slinn with quietly persistent significance.

"You can talk all the same," said Mulrady, accepting the significance. "He's my private secretary."

"It seems that for that reason we might choose another moment for our conversation," returned Don Cæsar haughtily. "Do I understand you cannot see me now?"

Mulrady hesitated. He had always revered and recognised a certain social superiority in Don Ramon Alvarado; somehow his son—a young man of half his age, and once a possible son-in-law—appeared to claim that recognition also. He rose, without a word, and preceded Don Cæsar upstairs into his drawing-room. The alien portrait on the wall seemed to evidently take sides with Don Cæsar, as against the common intruder, Mulrady.

"I hoped that Señora Mulrady might have saved me this interview," said the young man stiffly; "or at least have given you some intimation of the reason why I seek it. As you just now proposed my talking to you in the presence of the unfortunate Señor Esslinn himself, it appears she has not."

"I don't know what you're driving at, or what Mrs. Mulrady's got to do with Slinn or you," said Mulrady, in angry uneasiness.

"Do I understand," said Don Cæsar sternly, "that Señora Mulrady has not told you that I entrusted to her an important letter, belonging to Señor Esslinn, which I had the honour to discover in the wood six months ago, and which she said she would refer to you?"

"Letter?" echoed Mulrady slowly, "my wife had a letter of Slinn's?"

Don Cæsar regarded the millionaire attentively. "It is as I feared," he said gravely. "You do not know, or you would not have remained silent." He then briefly recounted the story of his finding Slinn's letter, his exhibition of it to the invalid, its disastrous effect upon him, and his innocent discovery of the contents. "I believed myself at that time on the eve of being allied with your family, Señor Mulrady," he said haughtily; "and when I found myself in possession of a secret which affected its integrity and good name, I did not choose to leave it in the helpless hands of its imbecile owner, or his sillier children, but proposed to trust it to the care of the señora, that she and you might deal with it as became your honour and mine. I followed her to Paris, and gave her the letter there. She affected to laugh at any pretension of the writer, or any claim he might have on your bounty; but she kept the letter, and, I fear, destroyed it. You will understand, Señor Mulrady, that when I found that my attentions were no longer agreeable to your daughter, I had no longer the right to speak to you on the subject, nor could I, without misapprehension, force her to return it. I should have still kept the secret to myself, if I had not since my return here made the nearer acquaintance of Señor Esslinn's daughters. I cannot present myself at his house, as a suitor for the hand of the Señorita Vashti, until I have asked his absolution for my complicity in the wrong that has been done to him. I cannot, as a *caballero*, do that without your permission. It is for that purpose I am here."

It needed only this last blow to complete the humiliation that whitened Mulrady's face. But his eye was none the less clear and his voice none the less steady as he turned to Don Cæsar.

"You know perfectly the contents of that letter?"

"I have kept a copy of it."

"Come with me."

He preceded his visitor down the staircase and back into his private office. Slinn looked up at his employer's face in unrestrained anxiety. Mulrady sat down at his desk, wrote a few hurried lines and rang a bell. A manager appeared from the counting-house.

"Send that to the bank."

He wiped his pen as methodically as if he had not at that moment countermanded the order to pay his daughter's dowry, and turned quietly to Slinn.

"Don Cæsar Alvarado has found the letter you wrote your wife on the day you made your strike in the tunnel that is now my shaft. He gave the letter to Mrs. Mulrady; but he has kept a copy."

Unheeding the frightened gesture of entreaty from Slinn, equally with the unfeigned astonishment of Don Cæsar, who was entirely unprepared for this revelation of Mulrady's and Slinn's confidences, he continued—

"He has brought the copy with him. I reckon it would only be square for you to compare it with what you remember of the original."

In obedience to a gesture from Mulrady, Don Cæsar mechanically took from his pocket a folded paper, and handed it to the paralytic. But Slinn's trembling fingers could scarcely unfold the paper; and as his eyes fell upon its contents, his convulsive lips could not articulate a word.

"P'raps I'd better read it for you," said Mulrady gently. "You kin follow me and stop me when I go wrong."

He took the paper, and, in a dead silence, read as follows:

"DEAR WIFE,—I've just struck gold in my tunnel, and you must get ready to come here with the children at once. It was after six months' hard work; and I'm so weak I . . . It's a fortune for us all. We should be rich even if it were only a branch vein dipping west] towards the next tunnel, instead of dipping east, according to my theory—"

"Stop!" said Slinn, in a voice that shook the room. Mulrady looked up.

"It's wrong, ain't it?" he asked anxiously; "it should be *east*, towards the next tunnel."

"No! It's *right!* I am wrong! We're all wrong!"

Slinn had risen to his feet, erect and inspired.

"Don't you see," he almost screamed with passionate vehemence; "it's *Masters' abandoned tunnel* your shaft has struck? Not mine! It was *Masters' pick* you found! I know it now!"

"And your own tunnel?" said Mulrady, springing to his feet in his excitement. "And *your* strike?"

"Is still there!"

The next instant, and before another question could be asked, Slinn had darted from the room. In the exaltation of that supreme discovery he regained the full control of mind and body. Mulrady and Don Cæsar, no less excited, followed him precipitately, and with difficulty kept up with his feverish speed. Their way lay along the base of the hill below Mulrady's shaft, and on a line with *Masters' abandoned tunnel*.

Only once he stopped, to snatch a pick from the hand of an astonished Chinaman at work in a ditch, as he still kept on his way, a quarter of a mile beyond the shaft. Here he stopped before a jagged hole in the hillside. Bared

to the sky and air, the very openness of its abandonment, its unpropitious position, and distance from the strike in Mulrady's shaft had no doubt preserved its integrity from wayfarer or prospector.

"You can't go in there alone and without a light," said Mulrady, laying his hand on the arm of the excited man. "Let me get more help and proper tools."

"I know every step in the dark as in the daylight," returned Slinn, struggling. "Let me go while I have yet strength and reason! Stand aside!"

He broke from them, and the next moment was swallowed up in the yawning blackness. They waited with baited breath until, after a seeming eternity of night and silence, they heard his returning footsteps, and ran forward to meet him. As he was carrying something clasped to his breast, they supported him to the opening. But at the same moment the object of his search and his burden, a misshapen wedge of gold and quartz, dropped with him, and both fell together with equal immobility to the ground. It was the treasure he had found four years ago, still intact. But the stroke that had fallen upon him then, and had followed him again three years after, smote him once more and for ever. He had still strength to turn his fading eyes to the other millionaire of Rough-and-Ready, who leaned over him.

"You—see," he gasped brokenly, "I was not crazy!"

No. He was dead!

The Ancestors of Peter Atherly.

CHAPTER I.

It must be admitted that the civilising processes of Rough-and-Ready were not marked by any of the ameliorating conditions of other improved camps. After the discovery of the famous "Eureka" lead, there was the usual influx of gamblers and saloon-keepers—but that was accepted as a matter of course. But it was thought hard that, after a church was built, and a new school erected, it should suddenly be found necessary to have doors that locked, instead of standing shamelessly open to the criticism and temptation of wayfarers, or that portable property could no longer be left out at night in the old fond reliance on universal brotherhood. The habit of borrowing was stopped with the introduction of more money into the camp and the establishment of rates of interest; the poorer people either took what they wanted, or as indiscreetly bought on credit. There were better clothes to be seen in its one long, straggling street, but those who wore them generally lacked the grim virtue of the old pioneers, and the fairer faces that were to be seen were generally rouged. There was a year or two of this kind of mutation, in which the youthful barbarism of Rough-and-Ready might have been said to struggle with adult civilised wickedness, and then the name itself disappeared. By an Act of the Legislature the growing town was called "Atherly," after the owner of the

Eureka mine—Peter Atherly—who had given largess to the town in its “Waterworks,” and a “Gin Mill,” as the new Atherly Hotel and its gilded bar-rooms were now called. Even at the last moment, however, the new title of “Atherly” hung in the balance. The romantic daughter of the pastor had said that Mr. Atherly should be called “Atherly of Atherly,” an aristocratic title so strongly suggestive of an innovation of democratic principles that it was not until it was discreetly suggested that everybody was still free to call him “Atherly, late of Rough-and-Ready,” that opposition ceased.

Possibly this incident may have first awakened him to the value of his name, and some anxiety as to its origin. Roughly speaking, Atherly’s father was only a bucolic emigrant from “Missouri,” and his mother had done the washing for the camp on her first arrival. The Atherlys had suffered on their overland journey from drought and famine, with the addition of being captured by Indians, who had held them captive for ten months. Indeed, Mr. Atherly, senior, never recovered from the effects of his captivity, and died shortly after Mrs. Atherly gave birth to twins, Peter and Jenny Atherly. This was scant knowledge for Peter in the glorification of his name through his immediate progenitors; but “Atherly of Atherly” still sounded pleasantly, and, as the young lady had said, smacked of old feudal days and honours. It was believed beyond doubt, even in their simple family records—the fly-leaf of a Bible—that Peter Atherly’s great grandfather was an Englishman who brought over to his Majesty’s Virginian possessions his only son, a boy. It was not established, however, to what class of deportation he belonged; whether he was suffering exile from religious or judicial conviction, or if he were only one of the articled “apprentices” who largely made up the American immigration of those days.

Howbeit, "Atherly" was undoubtedly an English name, even suggesting respectable and landed ancestry, and Peter Atherly was proud of it. He looked somewhat askance upon his Irish and German fellow-citizens, and talked a good deal about "race." Two things, however, concerned him: he was not in looks certainly like any type of modern Englishman as seen either on the stage in San Francisco, or as an actual tourist in the mining regions, and his accent was undoubtedly South-western. He was tall and dark, with deep-set eyes in a singularly immobile countenance; an erect but lithe and sinewy figure even for his thirty odd years, and might have easily been taken for any other American except for the single exception that his nose was distinctly Roman, and gave him a distinguished air. There was a suggestion of Abraham Lincoln (and even of Don Quixote in his tall, melancholy figure and length of limb), but nothing whatever that suggested an Englishman.

It was shortly after the christening of Atherly town that an incident occurred which at first shook, and then the more firmly established his mild monomania. His widowed mother had been for the last two years an inmate of a private asylum for inebriates, through certain habits contracted while washing for the camp in the first year of her widowhood. This had always been a matter of open sympathy to Rough-and-Ready; but it was a secret reproach hinted at in "Atherly," although it was known that the rich Peter Atherly kept his mother liberally supplied, and that both he and his sister "Jinny" or Jenny Atherly visited her frequently. One day he was telegraphed for, and on going to the asylum found Mrs. Atherly delirious and raving. Through her son's liberality she had bribed an attendant, and was fast succumbing to a private debauch. In the intervals of her delirium she called Peter by name, talked frenziedly and mysteriously of his "high connections"—

alluded to himself and his sister as being of the "true breed"—and with a certain vigour of epithet, picked up in the familiarity of the camp during the days when she was known as "Old Ma'am Atherly" or "Aunt Sally," declared that they were "no corn-cracking Hoosiers," "hayseed Pikes," nor "Northern Yankee scum," and that she should yet live to see them "holding their own lands again and the lands of their forefathers." Quieted at last by opiates, she fell into a more lucid but scarcely less distressing attitude. Recognising her son again, as well as her own fast failing condition, she sarcastically thanked him for coming to "see her off," congratulated him that he would soon be spared the lie and expense of keeping her here on account of his pride, under the thin pretext of trying to "cure" her. She knew that Sally Atherly of Rough-and-Ready wasn't considered fit company for "Atherly of Atherly" by his fine new friends. This and much more in a voice mingling maudlin sentiment with bitter resentment and an ominous glitter in her bloodshot and glairy eyes. Peter winced with a consciousness of the half-truth of her reproaches, but the curiosity and excitement awakened by the revelations of her frenzy were greater than his remorse. He said quickly—

" You were speaking of father!—of his family—his lands and possessions. Tell me again!"

" Wot are ye givin' us? " she ejaculated in husky suspicion, opening upon him her beady eyes, in which the film of death was already gathering.

" Tell me of father!—my father and his family! his great-grandfather!—the Atherlys, my relations—what you were saying. What do you know about them? "

" *That's* all ye wanter know—is it? *That's* what ye'r' comin' to the old washerwoman for—is it? " she burst out with the desperation of disgust. " Well—give it up! Ask me another! "

"But, mother—the old records, you know! The family Bible—what you once told us—me and Jinny!"

Something gurgled in her throat like a chuckle. With the energy of malevolence, she stammered: "There wasn't no records—there wasn't no family Bible! it's all a lie—you hear me! Your Atherly that you're so proud of was just a British bummer who was kicked outer his family in England and sent to buzz round in Americky. He honey-fogled me—Sally Magregor—out of a better family than his'n, in Kansas, and skyugled me away, but it was a straight out marriage—and I kin prove it. It was in the Saint Louis papers, and I've got it stored away safe enough in my trunk! You hear me! I'm shoutin'! But he wasn't no old settler in Mizzouri—he wasn't descended from any settler either! He was a new man outer England—fresh caught—and talked down his throat. And he fooled *me*—the darter of an old family that was settled on the right bank of the Mizzouri afore Dan'l Boone came to Kentucky—with his new philanderings. Then he broke up, and went all to pieces when we struck Californy, and left *me*, Sally Magregor—whose father had niggers of his own—to wash for Rough-and-Ready! *That's* your Atherly! Take him! I don't want him—I've done with him! I was done with him long afore—*afore*—" a cough checked her utterance, "*afore*—" she gasped again, but the words seemed to strangle in her throat. Intent only on her words and scarcely heeding her sufferings, Peter was bending over her eagerly, when the doctor rudely pulled him away and listed her to a sitting posture. But she never spoke again. The strongest restoratives quickly administered only left her in a state of scarcely breathing unconsciousness.

"Is she dying? Can't you bring her to?" said the anxious Peter; "if only for a moment, doctor."

"I'm thinkin'," said the visiting doctor, an old Scotch

army surgeon, looking at the rich Mr. Atherly with cool, professional contempt, "that your mother willna do any more washing for me as in the old time, nor give up her life again to support her bairns. And it isna my eentention to bring her back to pain for the purposes of geeneral conversation!"

Nor, indeed, did she ever come back to any purpose, but passed away with her unfinished sentence. And her limbs were scarcely decently composed by the attendants before Peter was rummaging the trunk in her room for the paper she had spoken of. It was in an old work-box—a now faded yellow clipping from a newspaper—lying amidst spoils of cotton thread, buttons, and beeswax, which he even then remembered to have seen upon his mother's lap when she superadded the sewing-on of buttons to her washing of the miners' shirts. And his dark and hollow cheek glowed with gratified sentiment as he read the clipping.

"We hear with regret of the death of Philip Atherly, Esq., of Rough-and-Ready, California. Mr. Atherly will be remembered by some of our readers as the hero of the romantic elopement of Miss Sallie Magregor, daughter of Colonel 'Bob' Magregor, which created such a stir in well-to-do circles some thirty years ago. It was known vaguely that the young couple had 'gone West'—a then unknown region—but it seems that after severe trials and tribulations on the frontier with savages, they emigrated early to Oregon, and then, on the outbreak of the gold fever, to California. But it will be a surprise to many to know that it has just transpired that Mr. Atherly was the second son of Sir Ashley Atherly, an English baronet, and by the death of his brother might have succeeded to the property and title."

He remained for some moments looking fixedly at the

paper, until the commonplace paragraph imprinted itself upon his brain as no line of sage or poet had ever done, and then he folded it up and put it in his pocket. In his exaltation he felt that even the mother he had never loved was promoted to a certain respect as his father's wife, although he was equally conscious of a new resentment against her for her contemptuous allusions to *his* father, and her evident hopeless inability to comprehend his position. His mother, he feared, was indeed low!—but *he* was his father's son! Nevertheless, he gave her a funeral at Atherly, long remembered for its barbaric opulence and display. Thirty carriages, procured from Sacramento at great expense, were freely offered to his friends to join in the astounding pageant. A wonderful casket of iron and silver, brought from San Francisco, held the remains of the ex-washer-woman of Rough-and-Ready. But a more remarkable innovation was the addition of a Royal crown to the other ornamentation of the casket. Peter Atherly's ideas of heraldry were very vague—Sacramento at that time offered him no opportunity of knowing what were the arms of the Atherlys—and the introduction of the Royal crown seemed to satisfy Peter's mind as to what a crest *might* be, while to the ordinary democratic mind it simply suggested that the corpse was English! Political criticism being thus happily averted, Mrs. Atherly was laid in the little cemetery—not far from certain rude wooden crosses which marked the burial-place of wanderers whose very name was unknown—and in due time a marble shaft was erected over it. But when, the next day, the county paper contained, in addition to the column-and-a-half description of the funeral, the more formal announcement of the death of "Mrs. Sallie Atherly, wife of the late Philip Atherly, second son of Sir Ashley Atherly, of England," criticism and comment broke out. The old pioneers of Rough-and-Ready felt that

they had been imposed upon, and that in some vague way the unfortunate woman had made them the victims of a huge practical joke during all these years. That she had grimly enjoyed their ignorance of her position they did not doubt. "Why, I remember once when I was sorter bully-raggin' her about mixin' up my duds with Doc Simmons's, and sendin' me Whisky Dick's old rags, she turned round sudden with a kind of screech, and ran out into the brush. I reckoned, at the time, that it was either 'drink' or feelin's, and could hav kicked myself for being sassy to the old woman, but I know now that all this time that air critter—that barrownet's daughter-in-law, was just laughin' herself into fits in the brush! No, sir, she played this yer camp for all it was worth—year in and out—and we just gave ourselves away like speckled idiots! and now she's lyin' out thar in the bone yard, and keeps on pintin' the joke—and roarin' at us in marble."

Even the later citizens in Atherly felt an equal resentment against her, but from different motives. That her drinking habits and her powerful vocabulary were all the effect of her aristocratic alliance they never doubted. And, although it brought the virtues of their own superior republican sobriety into greater contrast, they felt a scandal at having been tricked into attending this gilded funeral of dissipated rank. Peter Atherly found himself unpopular in his own town. The sober who drank from his free "Waterworks," and the giddy ones who imbibed at his "Gin Mill," equally criticised him. He could not understand it; his peculiar predilections had been accepted before when they were mere presumptions, why should they not *now*, when they were admitted facts? He was conscious of no change in himself since the funeral! Yet the criticism went on. Presently it took the milder but more contagious form of ridicule. In his own hotel, built with his own

money, and in his own presence, he had heard a reckless frequenter of the bar-room decline some proffered refreshment on the ground that "he only drank with his titled relatives." A local humorist, amidst the applause of an admiring crowd at the post-office window, had openly accused the postmaster of withholding letters to him from his only surviving brother "the Dook of Doncherknow." "The ole Dooky never onct missed the mail to let me know wot's goin' on in me childhood's home," remarked the humorist plaintively, "and yer's this dod-blasted gov'ment mule of a postmaster keepin' me letters back!" Letters with pretentious and gilded coats of arms, taken from the decorated inner lining of cigar-boxes, were posted to prominent citizens. The neighbouring and unregenerated settlement of Red Dog was more outrageous in its contribution. The *Red Dog Sentinel*, in commenting on the death of "Haulbowline Tom"—a drunken English man-o'-war's man—said: "It may not be generally known that our regretted fellow-citizen, while serving on H.M.S. *Boxer*, was secretly married to Queen Kikalu of the Friendly Group—but, unlike some of our prosperous neighbours, he never boasted of his Royal alliance, and resisted with steady British pluck any invitation to share the throne. Indeed, any allusion to the subject affected him deeply. There are those among us who will remember the beautiful portrait of his Royal bride tattooed upon his left arm with the Royal crest and the crossed flags of the two nations." Only Peter Atherly and his sister understood the sting inflicted either by accident or design in the latter sentence. Both he and his sister had some singular hieroglyphic branded on their arms—probably a reminiscence of their life in the plains in their infant Indian captivity. But there was no mistaking the general sentiment. The criticisms of a small town may become ineasible. Atherly determined to take the first

opportunity to leave Rough-and-Ready. He was rich, his property was secure; there was no reason why he should stay where his family pretensions were a drawback. And a further circumstance determined his resolution.

He was awaiting his sister in his new house on a little crest above the town. She had been at the time of her mother's death, and since, a private boarder in the Sacred Heart Convent at Santa Clara, whence she had been summoned to the funeral, but had returned the next day. Few people had noticed in her brother's carriage the veiled figure which might have belonged to one of the religious orders; still less did they remember the dark, lank, heavy-browed girl who had sometimes been seen about Rough-and-Ready. For she had her brother's melancholy, and greater reticence, and had continued of her own free will, long after her girlish pupilage at the convent, to live secluded under its maternal roof without taking orders. A general suspicion that she was either a religious "crank," or considered herself too good to live in a mountain mining town, had not contributed to her brother's popularity. In her abstraction from worldly ambitions she had, naturally, taken no part in her brother's family pretensions. He had given her an independent allowance, and she was supposed to be equally a sharer in his good fortune. Yet she had suddenly declared her intention of returning to Atherley, to consult him on affairs of importance. Peter was both surprised and eager; there was but little affection between them, but, preoccupied with his one idea, he was satisfied that she wanted to talk about the family.

But he was amazed, disappointed, and disconcerted. For Jenny Atherly, the sober recluse of Santa Clara, hidden in her sombre draperies at the funeral, was no longer to be recognised in the fashionable, smartly but somewhat over-dressed woman he saw before him. In spite of her large

features and the distinguishing Roman nose, like his own, she looked even pretty in her excitement. She had left the convent, she was tired of the life there, she was satisfied that a religious vocation would not suit her. In brief, she intended to enjoy herself like other women. If he really felt a pride in the family he ought to take her out, like other brothers, and "give her a show." He could do it there if he liked, and she would keep house for him. If he didn't want to, she must have enough money to keep her fashionably in San Francisco. But she wanted excitement, and that she *would have!* She wanted to go to balls, theatres, and entertainments, and she intended to! Her voice grew quite high, and her dark cheek glowed with some new-found emotion.

Astounded as he was, Peter succumbed. It was better that she should indulge her astounding caprice under his own roof than elsewhere. It would not do for the sister of an Atherly to provoke scandal. He gave entertainments, picnics, and parties, and "Jinny" Atherly plunged into these mild festivities with the enthusiasm of a schoolgirl. She not only could dance with feverish energy all night, but next day could mount a horse—she was a fearless rider—and lead the most accomplished horsemen. She was a good shot, she walked with the untiring foot of a coyote, she threaded the woods with the instinct of a pioneer. Peter regarded her with a singular mingling of astonishment and fear. Surely she had not learned this at school! These were not the teachings nor the sports of the good Sisters! He once dared to interrogate her regarding this change in her habits. "I always *felt* like it," she answered quickly, "but I kept it down. I used sometimes to feel that I couldn't stand it any longer, but must rush out and do something," she said passionately; "but," she went on with furtive eyes, and a sudden wild timidity like that of

a fawn, "I was afraid! I was afraid, *it was like mother!* It seemed to me to be *her* blood that was rising in me, and I kept it down—I didn't want to be like her—and I prayed and struggled against it. Did you," she said, suddenly grasping his hand, "ever feel like that?"

But Peter never had. His melancholy faith in his father's race had left no thought of his mother's blood mingling with it. "But," he said gravely, "believing this, why did you change?"

"Because I could hold out no longer. I should have gone crazy. Times I wanted to take some of those meek nuns, some of those white-faced pupils with their blue eyes and wavy flaxen hair, and strangle them. I couldn't strive and pray and struggle any longer *there*, and so I came here to let myself out! I suppose when I get married—and I ought to, with my money—it may change me! You don't suppose," she said, with a return of her wild-animal-like timidity, "it is anything that was in *father*, in those *Atherlys*, do you?"

But Peter had no idea of anything but virtue in the Atherly blood; he had heard that the upper class of Europeans were fond of field sports and of hunting; it was odd that his sister should inherit this propensity and not he. He regarded her more kindly for this evidence of race. "You think of getting married?" he said more gently, yet with a certain brotherly doubt that any man could like her enough, even with her money: "Is there any one here would—suit you?" he added diplomatically.

"No—I hate them all!" she burst out. "There isn't one I don't despise for his sickening, foppish, womanish airs."

Nevertheless, it was quite evident that some of the men were attracted by her singular originality and a certain good comradeship in her ways. And it was on one of their riding excursions that Peter noticed that she was singled out by a

good-looking, blonde-haired young lawyer of the town for his especial attentions. As the cavalcade straggled in climbing the mountain, the young fellow rode close to her saddle-bow, and as the distance lengthened between the other stragglers, they at last were quite alone. When the trail became more densely wooded, Peter quite lost sight of them. But when, a few moments later, having lost the trail himself, they again appeared in the distance before him, he was so amazed that he unconsciously halted. For the two horses were walking side by side, and the stranger's arm was round his sister's waist.

Had Peter any sense of humour, he might have smiled at this weakness in his Amazonian sister, but he saw only the serious, practical side of the situation, with, of course, its inevitable relation to his one controlling idea. The young man was in good practice, and would have made an eligible husband to any one else. But was he fit to mate with an Atherly? What would those as yet unknown and powerful relatives say to it? At the same time he could not help knowing that "Jinny," in the eccentricities of her virgin spinsterhood, might be equally objectionable to them, as she certainly was a severe trial to him here. If she were off his hands he might be able to prosecute his search for his relatives with more freedom. After all, there were *mésalliances* in all families, and being a woman, she was not in the direct line. Instead, therefore, of spurring forward to join them, he lingered a little until they passed out of sight, and until he was joined by a companion from behind. Him, too, he purposely delayed. They were walking slowly, breathing their mustangs, when his companion suddenly uttered a cry of alarm, and sprang from his horse. For on the trail before them lay the young lawyer quite unconscious, with his riderless steed nipping the young leaves of the underbrush. He was evidently stunned by a fall, although

across his face was a livid welt which might have been caused by collision with the small elastic limb of a sapling, or a blow from a riding-whip; happily the last idea was only in *Peter's* mind. As they lifted him up he came slowly to consciousness. He was bewildered and dazed at first, but as he began to speak the colour came back freshly to his face. He could not conceive, he stammered, what had happened. He was riding with Miss Atherly, and he supposed his horse had slipped upon some withered pine-needles and thrown him! A spasm of pain crossed his face suddenly, and he lifted his hand to the top of his head. Was he hurt *there*? No, but perhaps his hair, which was flowing and curly, had caught in the branches — like Absalom's! He tried to smile, and even begged them to assist him to his horse that he might follow his fair companion, who would be wondering where he was; but Peter, satisfied that he had received no serious injury, hurriedly enjoined him to stay, while he himself would follow his sister. Putting spurs to his horse, he succeeded, in spite of the slippery trail, in overtaking her near the summit. At the sound of his horse's hoofs she wheeled quickly, came dashing furiously towards him, and only pulled up at the sound of his voice. But she had not time to change her first attitude and expression, which was something which perplexed and alarmed him. Her long lithe figure was half crouching, half clinging to the horse's back, her loosened hair flying over her shoulders, her dark eyes gleaming with an odd nymph-like mischief. Her white teeth flashed as she recognised him, but her laugh was still mocking and uncanny. He took refuge in indignation.

"What has happened?" he said sharply.

"The fool tried to kiss me!" she said simply. "And I—I let out at him—like mother!"

Nevertheless she gave him one of those shy, timid glances

he had noticed before, and began coiling something around her fingers, with a suggestion of coy embarrassment, indescribably inconsistent with her previous masculine independence.

"You might have killed him," said Peter angrily.

"Perhaps I might! *Ought* I have killed him, Peter?" she said anxiously, yet with the same winning, timid smile. If she had not been his sister, he would have thought her quite handsome.

"As it is," he said impetuously, "you have made a frightful scandal here."

"He won't say anything about it—will he?" she inquired shyly, still twisting the something around her finger.

Peter did not reply; perhaps the young lawyer really loved her and would keep her secret! But he was vexed, and there was something maniacal in her twisting fingers. "What have you got there?" he said sharply.

She shook the object in the air before her with a laugh, "Only a lock of his hair," she said gaily; "but I didn't cut it off!"

"Throw it away, and come here!" he said angrily.

But she only tucked the little blonde curl into her waist belt and shook her head. He urged his horse forward, but she turned and fled, laughing as he pursued her. Being the better rider she could easily evade him whenever he got too near, and in this way they eventually reached the town and their house long before their companions. But she was far enough ahead of her brother to be able to dismount and hide her trophy with childish glee before he arrived.

She was right in believing that her unfortunate cavalier would make no revelation of her conduct, and his catastrophe passed as an accident. But Peter could not disguise the fact that much of his unpopularity was shared by his sister. The matrons of Atherly believed that she was "fast,"

and remembered more distinctly than ever the evil habits of her mother. That she would, in the due course of time, "take to drink" they never doubted. Her dancing was considered outrageous in its unfettered freedom, and her extraordinary powers of endurance were looked upon as "masculine" by the weaker girls whose partners she took from them. She reciprocally looked down upon them, and made no secret of her contempt for their small refinements and fancies. She affected only the society of men, and even treated them with a familiarity that was both fearless and scornful. Peter saw that it was useless to face the opposition; Miss Atherly did not seem to encourage the renewal of the young lawyer's attentions, although it was evident that he was still attracted by her, nor did she seem to invite advances from others. He must go away—and he would have to take her with him. It seemed ridiculous that a woman of thirty, of masculine character, should require a chaperon in a brother of equal age; but Peter knew the singular blending of childlike ignorance with this Amazonian quality. He had made his arrangements for an absence from Atherly of three or four years, and they departed together. The young fair-haired lawyer came to the stage-coach office to see them off. Peter could detect no sentiment in his sister's familiar farewell of her unfortunate suitor. At New York, however, it was arranged that "Jinny" should stay with some friends whom they had made *en route*, and that, if she wished, she could come to Europe later, and join him in London.

Thus relieved of one, Peter Atherly of Atherly started on his cherished quest of his other and more remote relations.

CHAPTER II.

PETER AATHERLY had been four months in England, but knew little of the country until one summer afternoon when his carriage rolled along the well-ordered road between Nonningsby Station and Ashley Grange.

In that four months he had consulted authorities, examined records, visited the Heralds' College, written letters, and made a few friends. A rich American, tracing his genealogical tree, was not a new thing—even in that day—in London; but there was something original and simple in his methods, and so much that was grave, reserved, and un-American in his personality that it awakened interest. A recognition that he was a foreigner, but a puzzled doubt, however, of his exact nationality, which he found everywhere, at first pained him, but he became reconciled to it at about the same time that his English acquaintances abandoned their own reserve and caution before the greater reticence of this melancholy American, and actually became the questioners! In this way his quest became known only as a disclosure of his own courtesy, and offers of assistance were pressed eagerly upon him. That was why Sir Edward Atherly found himself gravely puzzled, as he sat with his family solicitor one morning in the library of Ashley Grange.

"Humph!" said Sir Edward. "And you say he has absolutely no other purpose in making these inquiries?"

"Positively none," returned the solicitor. "He is even willing to sign a renunciation of any claim which might arise out of this information. It is rather a singular case, but he seems to be a rich man and quite able to indulge his harmless caprices."

"And you are quite sure he is Philip's son?"

"Quite, from the papers he brings me. Of course I informed him that even if he should be able to establish a legal marriage he could expect nothing as next of kin, as you had children of your own. He seemed to know that already, and avowed that his only wish was to satisfy his own mind."

"I suppose he wants to claim kinship and all that sort of thing for society's sake?"

"I do not think so," said the solicitor drily. "I suggested an interview with you, but he seemed to think it quite unnecessary if *I* could give him the information he required."

"Ha!" said Sir Edward promptly, "we'll invite him here. Lady Atherly can bring in some people to see him. Is he—ahem—What is he like? The usual American, I suppose?"

"Not at all. Quite foreign-looking—dark, and rather like an Italian. There is no resemblance to Mr. Philip," he said, glancing at the painting of a flaxen-haired child fondling a greyhound under the elms of Ashley Park.

"Ah! Yes, yes! Perhaps the mother was one of those southern creoles, or mulattoes," said Sir Edward with an Englishman's tolerant regard for the vagaries of people who were clearly not English; "they're rather attractive women, I hear."

"I think you do quite well to be civil to him," said the solicitor. "He seems to take an interest in the family, and being rich—and apparently only anxious to enhance the family prestige—you ought to know him. Now, in reference to those mortgages on Appleby Farm—if you could get—"

"Yes, yes!" said Sir Edward quickly; "we'll have him down here; and I say!—you'll come too?"

The solicitor bowed. "And, by the way," continued Sir

Edward, "there was a girl too—wasn't there? He has a sister, I believe?"

"Yes, but he has left her in America."

"Ah! yes—very good—yes!—of course. We'll have Lord Greyshott and Sir Roger and old Lady Everton—she knows all about Sir Ashley and the family. And—er—is he young or old?"

"About thirty, I should say, Sir Edward."

"Ah, well! We'll have Lady Elfrida over from the Towers."

Had Peter known of these preparations he might have turned back to Nonningsby without even visiting the old church in Ashley Park which he had been told held the ashes of his ancestors. For during these four months the conviction that he was a foreigner, and that he had little or nothing in common with things here, had been clearly forced upon him. He could recognise some kinship in the manners and customs of the people to those he had known in the West and on the Atlantic coast, but not to his own individuality, and he seemed even more a stranger here—where he had expected to feel the thrill of consanguinity—than in the West. He had accepted the invitation of the living Atherly for the sake of the Atherlys long dead and forgotten. As the great quadrangle of stone and ivy listed itself out of the park, he looked longingly towards the little square tower which peeped from between the yews nearer the road. As the carriage drove up to the carved archway whence so many Atherlys had issued into the world, he could not believe that any of his blood had gone forth from it, or, except himself, had ever entered it before. Once in the great house he felt like a prisoner as he wandered through the long corridors to his room; even the noble trees beyond his mullioned windows seemed of another growth than those he had known.

There was no doubt that he created a sensation at Ashley Grange, not only from his singular kinship, but from his striking individuality. The Atherlys and their guests were fascinated and freely admiring. His very originality, which prevented them from comparing him with any English or American standard of excellence, gave them a comfortable assurance of safety in their admiration. His reserve, his seriousness, his simplicity, very unlike their own, and yet near enough to suggest a delicate flattery, was in his favour. So was his naïve frankness in regard to his status in the family, shown in the few words of greeting with Sir Ashley, and in his later simple yet free admissions regarding his obscure youth, his former poverty, and his present wealth. He boasted of neither; he was disturbed by neither. Standing alone, a stranger, for the first time in an assemblage of distinguished and titled men and women, he betrayed no consciousness; surrounded for the first time by objects which he knew his wealth could not buy, he showed the most unmistakable indifference—the indifference of temperament. The ladies vied with each other to attack this unimpressible nature—this profound isolation from external attraction. They followed him about, they looked into his dark, melancholy eyes; it was impossible, they thought, that he could continue this superb acting for ever. A glance, a smile, a burst of ingenuous confidence, a covert appeal to his chivalry would yet catch him tripping. But the melancholy eyes that had gazed at the treasures of Ashley Grange and the opulent ease of its guests without kindling, opened to their first emotion—wonder! At which Lady Elfrida, who had ingenuously admired him, hated him a little, as the first step towards a kindlier feeling.

The next day, having declared his intention of visiting Ashley Church, and, as frankly, his intention of going there

alone, he slipped out in the afternoon and made his way quietly through the park to the square ivied tower he had first seen. In this tranquil level length of the wood there was the one spot, the churchyard, where, oddly enough, the green earth heaved into little billows as if to show the turbulence of that life which those who lay below them had lately quitted. It was a relief to the somewhat studied and formal monotony of the well-ordered woodland—every rood of which had been paced by visitors, keepers, or poachers—to find those decrepit and bending tombstones, lurching at every angle, or deeply sinking into the green sea of forgetfulness around them. All this, and the trodden paths of the villagers towards that common place of meeting, struck him as being more human than anything he had left behind him at the Grange.

He entered the ivy-grown porch and stared for a moment at the half legal official parochial notices posted on the oaken door—his first obtrusive intimation of the combination of Church and State—and hesitated. He was not prepared to find that this last resting-place of his people had something to do with taxes and tithes, and that a certain material respectability and security attended his votive sigh. God and the reigning Sovereign of the Realm preserved a decorous alliance in the Royal arms that appeared above the official notices. Presently he pushed open the door gently and entered the nave. For a moment it seemed to him as if the arched gloom of the woods he had left behind was repeated in the dim aisle and vaulted roof; there was an earthy odour as if the church itself, springing from the fertilising dust below, had taken root in the soil; the chequers of light from the faded stained-glass windows fell like the flicker of leaves on the pavement. He paused before the cold altar, and started, for beside him lay the recumbent figure of a

warrior pillowed on his helmet with the paraphernalia of his trade around him. A sudden childish memory of the great western plains and the biers of the Indian "braves" raised on upright poles against the staring sky and above the sun-baked prairie rushed upon him. There, too, had lain the weapons of the departed chieftain—there, too, lay the Indian's "faithful hound," here simulated by the cross-legged Crusader's canine effigy. And now, strangest of all, he found that this unlooked-for recollection and remembrance thrilled him more at that moment than the dead before him. Here they rested—the Atherlys of centuries; recumbent in armour or priestly robes, upright in busts that were periwigged or hidden in long curls, above the marble record of their deeds and virtues. Some of these records were in Latin—an unknown tongue to Peter—some in a quaint English almost as unintelligible—but none as foreign to him as the dead themselves. Their banners waved above his head; their voices filled the silent church, but fell upon his vacant eye and duller ear. He was none of them.

Presently he was conscious of a footstep so faint, so subtle, that it might have come from a peregrinating ghost. He turned quickly and saw Lady Elfrida, half bold, yet half frightened, halting beside a pillar of the chancel. But there was nothing of the dead about her: she was radiating and pulsating with the uncompromising and material freshness of English girlhood. The wild rose in the hedgerow was not more tangible than her cheek, nor the summer sky more clearly cool and blue than her eyes. The vigour of health and unfettered freedom of limb was in her figure from her buckled walking-shoe to her brown hair topped by a sailor hat. The assurance and contentment of a well-ordered life, of secured position and freedom from vain anxieties or expectations, were visible

in every line of her refined, delicate, and evenly quiescent features. And yet Lady Elfrida for the first time in her girlhood felt a little nervous.

Yet she was frank, too, with the frankness of those who have no thought of being misunderstood. She said she had come there out of curiosity to see how he would "get on" with his ancestors. She had been watching him from the chancel ever since he came—and she was disappointed. As far as emotion went she thought he had the advantage of the stoniest and longest dead of them all. Perhaps he did not like them? But he must be careful what he *said*, for some of her own people were there—manifestly this one. (She put the toe of her buckled shoe on the Crusader Peter had just looked at.) And then there was another in the corner. So she had a right to come there as well as he—and she could act as cicerone! This one was a De Brecy, one of King John's knights who married an Atherly. (She swung herself into a half-sitting posture on the effigy of the dead knight, composed her straight short skirt over her trim ankles, and looked up in Peter's dark face.) That would make them some kind of relations—wouldn't it? He must come over to Bentley Towers and see the rest of the De Brecys in the chapel there to-morrow. Perhaps there might be some he liked better and who looked more like him. For there was no one here or at the Grange who resembled him in the least.

He assented to the truth of this with such grave disarming courtesy, and yet with such undisguised wonder—as she appeared to talk with greater freedom to a stranger than an American girl would—that she at once popped off the Crusader, and accompanied him somewhat more demurely around the church. Suddenly she stopped with a slight exclamation.

They had halted before a tablet to the memory of a later

Atherly, an officer of his Majesty's 100th Foot, who was killed at Braddock's Defeat. The tablet was supported on the one side by a weeping Fame, and on the other by a manacled North American Indian. She stammered and said: "You see there are other Atherlys who went to America even before your father," and then stopped with a sense of having made a slip.

A wild and inexplicable resentment against this complacent historical outrage suddenly took possession of Peter. He knew that his rage was inconsistent with his usual calm, but he could not help it! His swarthy cheek glowed, his dark eyes flashed, he almost trembled with excitement as he hurriedly pointed out to Lady Elfrida that the Indians were *victorious* in that ill-fated expedition of the British Forces, and that the captive savage was an allegorical lie. So swift and convincing was his emotion that the young girl, knowing nothing of the subject and caring less, shared his indignation, followed him with anxious eyes, and their hands for an instant touched in innocent and generous sympathy. And then—he knew not how or why—a still more wild and terrible idea sprang up in his fancy. He knew it was madness, yet for a moment he could only stand and grapple with it silently and breathlessly. It was to seize this young and innocent girl, this witness of his disappointment, this complacent and beautiful type of all they valued here, and bear her away—a prisoner, a hostage—he knew not why—on a galloping horse in the dust of the prairie—far beyond the seas! It was only when he saw her cheek flush and pale, when he saw her staring at him with helpless, frightened, but fascinated eyes—the eyes of the fluttering bird under the spell of the rattlesnake—that he drew his breath and turned bewildered away. "And do you know, dear," she said with naïve simplicity to her sister that evening, "that although he was an American,

and everybody says that they don't care at all for those poor Indians, he was so magnanimous in his indignation that I fancied he looked like one of Cooper's heroes himself, rather than an Atherly. It was such a stupid thing for me to show him that tomb of Major Atherly, you know, who fought the Americans—didn't he?—or was it later?—but I quite forgot he was an American." And with this belief in her mind, and in the high expiation of a noble nature, she forbore her characteristic raillery, and followed him meekly, manacled in spirit like the allegorical figure, to the church porch, where they separated, to meet on the morrow. But that morrow never came.

For late in the afternoon a cable message reached him from California asking him to return to accept a nomination to Congress from his own district. It determined his resolution, which for a moment at the church porch had wavered under the bright eyes of Lady Elfrida. He telegraphed his acceptance, hurriedly took leave of his honestly lamenting kinsman, followed his despatch to London, and in a few days was on the Atlantic.

How he was received in California, how he found his sister married to the blonde lawyer, how he recovered his popularity and won his election are details that do not belong to this chronicle of his quest. And that quest seems to have terminated for ever with his appearance at Washington to take his seat as Congressman.

It was the night of a *levée* at the White House. The East Room was crowded with smartly dressed men and women of the capital, quaintly simple legislators from remote States in bygone fashions, officers in uniform, and the diplomatic circle blazing with orders. The invoker of this brilliant assembly stood in simple evening dress near the door—unattended and hedged by no formality. He shook the hand of the new Congressman heartily, con-

gratulated him by name, and turned smilingly to the next comer. Presently there was a slight stir at one of the opposite doors, the crowd fell back, and five figures stalked majestically into the centre of the room. They were the leading chiefs of an Indian Reservation coming to pay their respects to "their Great Father," the President. Their costumes were a mingling of the picturesque with the grotesque; of tawdriness with magnificence; of artificial tinsel and glitter with the regal spoils of the chase; of childlike vanity with barbaric pride. Yet before these the glittering orders and ribbons of the diplomats became dull and meaningless, the uniforms of the officers mere servile livery. Their painted, immobile faces and plumed heads towered with grave dignity above the meaner crowd; their inscrutable eyes returned no response to the timid glances directed towards them. They stood by themselves, alone and impassive—yet their presence filled the room with the sense of kings. The unostentatious, simple Republican Court suddenly seemed to have become Royal. Even the interpreter who stood between their remote dignity and the nearer civilised world acquired the status of a Court Chamberlain.

When "their Great Father," apparently the less important personage, had smilingly received them, a political colleague approached Peter and took his arm. "Grey Eagle would like to speak with you. Come on! Here's your chance! You may be put on the Committee of Indian Relations and pick up a few facts. Remember we want a firm policy—no more palaver about the "Great Father," and no more blankets and guns! You know what we used to say out West: "The only 'Good Indian' is a dead one." So wade in, and hear what the old plug hat has to say."

Peter permitted himself to be led to the group. Even at that moment he remembered the figure of the Indian on

the tomb at Ashley Grange, and felt a slight flush of satisfaction over the superior height and bearing of Grey Eagle.

"How!" said Grey Eagle. "How!" said the other four chiefs. "How!" repeated Peter instinctively. At a gesture from Grey Eagle the interpreter said: "Let your friend stand back—Grey Eagle has nothing to say to him. He wishes to speak only with you."

Peter's friend reluctantly withdrew, but threw a cautioning glance towards him. "Ugh!" said Grey Eagle. "Ugh!" said the other chiefs. A few guttural words followed to the interpreter, who turned and, facing Peter with the monotonous impassiveness which he had caught from the chiefs, said: "He says he knew your father. He was a great chief—with many horses and many squaws. He is dead."

"My father was an Englishman—Philip Atherly!" said Peter, with an odd nervousness creeping over him.

The interpreter repeated the words to Grey Eagle, who, after a guttural "Ugh!" answered in his own tongue.

"He says," continued the interpreter with a slight shrug, yet relapsing into his former impassiveness, "that your father was a great chief, and your mother a pale face, or white woman. She was captured with an Englishman, but she became the wife of the chief while in captivity. She was only released before the birth of her children, but a year or two afterwards she brought them as infants to see their father—the Great Chief—and to get the mark of their tribe. He says you and your sister are each marked on the left arm."

Then Grey Eagle opened his mouth and uttered his first English sentence. "His father, big Injin, take common white squaw! Papoose no good—too much white squaw mother, not enough big Injin father! Look! He big man—but no can bear pain! Ugh!"

The interpreter turned in time to catch Peter. He had fainted.

CHAPTER III.

A HOT afternoon on the plains. A dusty cavalcade of U.S. cavalry and commissary waggons which from a distance preserved a certain military precision of movement, but on nearer view resolved itself into straggling troopers in "twos" and "fours" interspersed between the waggons, two non-commissioned officers and a guide riding ahead who had already fallen into the cavalry slouch, but off to the right, smartly erect and cadet-like, the young lieutenant in command. A wide road that had the appearance of being at once well travelled and yet deserted, and that, although well defined under foot, still seemed to disappear and lose itself a hundred feet ahead in the monotonous level. A horizon that in that clear, dry, hazeless atmosphere never mocked you, yet never changed, but kept its eternal rim of mountains at the same height and distance from hour to hour and day to day. Dust—a parching alkaline powder that cracked the skin—everywhere, clinging to the hubs and spokes of the wheels, without being disturbed by movement, encrusting the cavalryman from his high boots to the crossed sabres of his cap; going off in small puffs like explosions under the plunging hoofs of the horses, but too heavy to rise and follow them. A reeking smell of horse sweat and boot leather that lingered in the road long after the train had passed. An external silence broken only by the cough of a jaded horse in the suffocating dust, or the cracking of harness leather. Within one of the waggons, that seemed a miracle of military neatness and methodical stowage, a lazy conversation carried on by a grizzled driver and sun-browned farrier.

"'Who be you?' sezee. 'I'm Philip Atherly, a

member of Congress,' sez the long dark-completed man, sezee, 'and I'm on a Commission for looking into this yer Injin grievance,' sezee. 'You may be God Almighty,' sez Nebraska Bill, sezee, 'but you look a d—d sight more like a hoss-stealin' Apache, and we don't want any of your psalm-singing, big-talkin', peacemakers interferin' with our ways of treatin' pizen—you hear me?—I'm shoutin',' sezee. With that the dark-completed man's eyes began to glisten, and he sorter squirmed all over to get at Bill, and Bill outs with his battery. 'Whoa, will ye! what's up with *you* now?' The latter remark was directed to the young spirited near horse he was driving, who was beginning to be strangely excited.

"What happened then?" said the farrier lazily.

"Well," continued the driver, having momentarily quieted his horse, "I reckoned it was about time for me to wheel into line, for fellers of the Bill stripe, out on the plains, would ez leave plug a man in citizen's clothes, even if he was the President himself, as they would drop on an Injin or a nigger. 'Look here, Bill,' sez I, 'I'm escortin' this stranger under Gov'ment orders, and I'm responsible for him. I ain't allowed to waste Gov'ment powder and shot on *your* kind unless I've orders, but if you'll wait till I strip off this shell¹ I'll lamm the stuffin' outer ye, afore the stranger.' With that Bill just danced with rage but dassent fire, for *he* knew and *I* knew that if he'd plugged me he'd been a dead frontiersman afore the next mornin'."

"But you'd have had to give him up to the authorities, and a jury of his own kind would have set him free."

"Not much! If you hadn't just joined, you'd know that ain't the way o' 30th Cavalry," returned the driver. "The Kernel would have issued his orders to bring in

¹ Cavalry jacket.

Bill dead or alive, and the 30th would have managed to bring him in *dead!* Then your jury might have sat on him! Tell you what, chaps of the Bill stripe don't care overmuch to tackle the yaller braid.”¹

“But what's this yer Congressman interferin' for, anyway?”

“He's a rich Californian. Thinks he's got a 'call,' I reckon, to look arter Injins, just as them Abolitionists looked arter slaves. And get hated just as they was by the folks here—and as *we* are, too, for the matter of that.”

“Well, I dunno,” rejoined the farrier, “it don't seem natural for white men to quarrel with each other about the way to treat an Injin, and that Injin lyin' in ambush to shoot 'em both. And ef Gov'ment would only make up its mind how to treat 'em, instead of one day pretendin' to be their 'Great Father' and treatin' them like babies, and the next makin' treaties with 'em like as they was furriners, and the next sendin' out a handful of us to lick ten thousand of them. Wot's the use of *one* regiment—even two—agin a nation—on their own ground?”

“A nation—and on their own ground—that's just what you've hit it, Softy. That's the argument of that Congressman Atherly, as I've heard him talk with the Kernel.”

“And what did the Kernel say?”

“The Kernel reckoned it was his business to obey orders—and so should you. So shut your head! If ye wanted to talk about Gov'ment ye might say suthin' about its usin' us to convoy picnics and excursion parties around, who come out here to have a day's shootin', under some big-wig of a political boss or railroad president, with a letter to the General. And *we're* told off to look arter their precious skins and keep the Injins off 'em—and they

¹ Characteristic trimming of cavalry jacket.

shootin' or skeerin' off the Injins' nat'ral game—and our provender! Darn my skin ef there'll be much to scout for ef this goes on. And b'gosh!—if they aren't now ringin' in a lot of titled forrainers to hunt 'big game' as they call it—Lord This-and-That, and Count So-and-So—all of 'em with letters to the General from the Washington Cabinet to show 'hospitality,' or from millionaires who've bin hobnobbin' with 'em in the Old Country. And darn my skin ef some of 'em ain't bringin' their wives and sisters along too. There was a lord and lady passed through here under escort last week, and we're goin' to pick up some more of 'em at Fort Biggs to-morrow—and I reckon some of us will be told off to act as ladies' maids or milliners. Nothin' short of a good Injin scare, I reckon, would send them and us about our reg'lar business. Whoa, then, will ye? At it again, are ye? What's gone of the d—d critter?"

Here the fractious near horse was again beginning to show signs of disturbance and active terror. His quivering nostrils were turned towards the wind, and he almost leaped the centre pole in his frantic effort to avoid it. The eyes of the two men were turned instinctively in that direction. Nothing was to be seen—the illimitable plain and the sinking sun were all that met the eye. But the horse continued to struggle, and the waggon stopped. Then it was discovered that the horse of an adjacent trooper was also labouring under the same mysterious excitement, and at the same moment waggon No. 3 halted. The infection of some inexplicable terror was spreading among them. Then two non-commissioned officers came riding down the line at a sharp canter, and were joined quickly by the young lieutenant, who gave an order. The trumpeter instinctively raised his instrument to his lips, but was stopped by another order.

And then, as seen by a distant observer, a singular spectacle was unfolded. The straggling train suddenly seemed to resolve itself into a large widening circle of horsemen, revolving round and partly hiding the few heavy waggons that were being rapidly freed from their struggling teams. These, too, joined the circle and were driven before the whirling troopers. Gradually the circle seemed to grow smaller under the "winding-up" of those evolutions, until the horseless waggons reappeared again, motionless, fronting the four points of the compass, thus making the radii of a smaller inner circle into which the teams of the waggons as well as the troopers' horses were closely "wound up" and densely packed together in an immovable mass. As the circle became smaller the troopers leaped from their horses—which, however, continued to blindly follow each other in the narrower circle—and ran to the waggons carbines in hand. In five minutes from the time of giving the order the straggling train was a fortified camp, the horses corralled in the centre, the dismounted troopers securely posted with their repeating carbines in the angles of the rude bastions formed by the deserted waggons, and ready for an attack. The stampede, if such it was, was stopped.

And yet no cause for it was to be seen! Nothing in earth or sky suggested a reason for this extraordinary panic, or the marvellous evolution that suppressed it. The guide, with three men in open order, rode out and radiated across the empty plain, returning as empty of result. In an hour the horses were sufficiently calmed and fed, the camp slowly unwound itself, the teams were set to and were led out of the circle, and as the rays of the setting sun began to expand fanlike across the plain the cavalcade moved on. But between them and the sinking sun, and visible through its last rays, was a faint line of haze parallel with their track. Yet even this, too, quickly faded away.

Had the guide, however, penetrated half a mile further to the west he would have come upon the cause of the panic, and a spectacle more marvellous than that he had just witnessed. For the illimitable plain with its monotonous prospect was far from being level; a hundred yards further on he would have slowly and imperceptibly descended into a depression nearly a mile in width. Here he not only would have completely lost sight of *his own* cavalcade, but have come upon *another* thrice its length. For here was a trailing line of jog-trotting dusky shapes, some crouching on dwarf ponies half their size, some trailing lances, lodge-poles, rifles, women and children after them, all moving with a monotonous rhythmic motion as marked as the military precision of the other cavalcade, and always on a parallel line with it. They had done so all day, keeping touch and distance by stealthy videttes that crept and crawled along the imperceptible slope towards the unconscious white men. It was, no doubt, the near proximity of one of those watchers that had touched the keen scent of the troopers' horses.

The moon came up; the two cavalcades, scarcely a mile apart, moved on in unison together. Then suddenly the dusky caravan seemed to arise, stretch itself out, and swept away like a morning mist towards the west. The bugles of Fort Biggs had just rung out.

Peter Atherly was up early the next morning pacing the verandah of the Commandant's house at Fort Biggs. It had been his intention to visit the new Indian Reservation that day, but he had just received a letter announcing an unexpected visit from his sister, who wished to join him. He had never told her the secret of their Indian paternity, as it had been revealed to him from the scornful lips of Grey Eagle a year ago; he knew her strangely excitable

nature ; besides, she was a wife now, and the secret would have to be shared with her husband. When he himself had recovered from the shock of the revelation, two things had impressed themselves upon his reserved and gloomy nature : a horror of his previous claim upon the Atherlys, and an infinite pity and sense of duty towards his own race. He had devoted himself and his increasing wealth to this one object ; it seemed to him at times almost providential that his position as a legislator, which he had accepted as a whim or fancy, should have given him this singular opportunity.

Yet it was not an easy task or an enviable position. He was obliged to divorce himself from his political party as well as keep clear of the wild schemes of impractical enthusiasts, too practical "contractors," and the still more helpless bigotry of Christian civilisers—who would have regenerated the Indian with a text which he did not understand, and they were unable to illustrate by example. He had expected the opposition of lawless frontiersmen and ignorant settlers—as roughly indicated in the conversation already recorded ; indeed he had felt it difficult to argue his humane theories under the smoking roof of a raided settler's cabin, whose owner, however, had forgotten his own repeated provocations, or the trespass of which he was proud. But Atherly's unaffected and unobtrusive zeal ; his fixity of purpose, his undoubted courage, his self-abnegation, and above all the gentle melancholy and half-philosophical wisdom of this new missionary, won him the respect and assistance of even the most callous or the most sceptical of officials. The Secretary of the Interior had given him carte-blanche ; the President trusted him, and it was said had granted him extraordinary powers. Oddly enough it was only his own Californian constituency, who had once laughed at what they deemed his early aristocratic pretensions, who

now found fault with his democratic philanthropy. That a man who had been so well received in England—the news of his visit to Ashley Grange had been duly recorded—should sink so low as “to take up with the Injins” of his own country, galled their republican pride. A few of his personal friends regretted that he had not brought back from England more conservative and fashionable graces, and had not improved his opportunities. Unfortunately there was no essentially English policy of trusting aborigines that they knew of.

In his gloomy self-scrutiny he had often wondered if he ought not to openly proclaim his kinship with the despised race, but he was always deterred by the thought of his sister and her husband, as well as by the persistent doubt whether his advocacy of Indian rights with his fellow-countrymen would be as well served by such a course. And here again he was perplexed by a singular incident of his early missionary efforts which he had at first treated with cold surprise, but to which later reflection had given a new significance. After Grey Eagle's revelation he had made a pilgrimage to the Indian country to verify the statements regarding his dead father—the Indian chief “Silver Cloud.” Despite the confusion of tribal dialects he was amazed to find that the Indian tongue came back to him almost as a forgotten boyish memory, so that he was soon able to do without an interpreter. But not until that functionary, who knew his secret, appeared one day as a more significant ambassador. “Grey Eagle says if you want truly to be a brother to his people you must take a wife among them. He loves you—take one of his!” Peter, through whose veins—albeit of mixed blood—ran that Puritan ice so often found throughout the Great West, was frigidly amazed. In vain did the interpreter assure him that the wife in question, “Little Daybreak,” was a wife only in name, a prudent reserve kept

by Grey Eagle in the orphan daughter of a brother brave. But Peter was adamant. Whatever answer the interpreter returned to Grey Eagle he never knew. But to his alarm he presently found that the Indian maiden, "Little Daybreak," had been aware of Grey Eagle's offer, and had with pathetic simplicity already considered herself Peter's spouse. During his stay at the encampment he found her sitting before his lodge every morning. A girl of sixteen in years, a child of six in intellect, she flashed her little white teeth upon him when he lifted his tent flap, content to receive his grave, melancholy bow, or patiently trotted at his side carrying things he did not want, which she had taken from the lodge. When he sat down to work she remained seated at a distance looking at him with glistening beady eyes like blackberries set in milk, and softly scratching the little bare brown ankle of one foot with the turned-in toes of the other, after an infantine fashion. Yet after he had left—a still single man, solely through his interpreter's diplomacy, as he always believed—he was very worried as to the wisdom of his course. Why should he not in this way ally himself to his unfortunate race irrevocably? Perhaps there was an answer somewhere in his consciousness which he dared not voice to himself. Since his visit to the English Atherlys he had put resolutely aside everything that related to that episode, which he now considered was an unhappy imposture. But there were times when a vision of Lady Elfrida gazing at him with wondering, fascinated eyes passed across his fancy; even the contact with his own race and his thoughts of their wrongs recalled to him the tomb of the soldier Atherly and the carven captive savage supporter. He could not pass the upright supported bier of an Indian brave—slowly desiccating in the desert air—without seeing in the dead warrior's paraphernalia of arms and trophies some resemblance to the cross-legged Crusader on whose marble effigy

she had girlishly perched herself as she told the story of her ancestors. Yet only the peaceful gloom and repose of the old church touched him now; even she, too, with all her glory of English girlhood, seemed to belong to that remote past. She was part of the restful quiet of the church; the yews in the quaint old churchyard might have waved over her as well.

Still, he was eager to see his sister, and if he should conclude to impart to her his secret she might advise him. At all events, he decided to delay his departure until her arrival, a decision with which the commanding officer concurred, as a foraging party had that morning discovered traces of Indians in the vicinity of the fort, and the lately arrived commissary train had reported the unaccountable but promptly prevented stampede.

Unfortunately, his sister "Jenny" appeared accompanied by her husband, who seized an early opportunity to take Peter aside and confide to him his anxiety about her health, and the strange fits of excitement under which she occasionally laboured. Remembering the episode of the Californian woods three years ago, Peter stared at this good-natured, good-looking man, whose life he had always believed she once imperilled, and wondered more than ever at their strange union.

"Do you ever quarrel?" asked Peter bluntly.

"No," said the good-hearted fellow warmly, "never! We have never had a harsh word; she's the dearest girl—the best wife in the world to me, but"—he hesitated—"you know there are times when I think she confounds me with somebody else, and is strange! Sometimes when we are in company she stands alone and stares at everybody, without saying a word, as if she didn't understand them. Or else she gets painfully excited and dances all night until she is exhausted. I thought, perhaps," he added timidly, "that

you might know, and would tell me if she had any singu'ar experience as a child—any illness, or," he went on still more gently, "if perhaps her mother or father—"

"No," interrupted Peter almost brusquely, with the sudden conviction that this was no time for revelation of his secret. "No—nothing."

"The doctor says," continued Lascelles with that hesitating, almost mystic delicacy with which most gentlemen approach a subject upon which their wives talk openly, "that it may be owing to Jenny's peculiar state of health just now, you know, and that if—all went well, you know, and there should be—don't you see—a little child—"

Peter interrupted him with a start. A child! Jenny's child! Silver Cloud's grandchild! This was a complication he had not thought of. No! It was too late to tell his secret now. He only nodded his head abstractedly and said coldly, "I daresay he is right."

Nevertheless Jenny was looking remarkably well. Perhaps it was the excitement of travel and new surroundings; but her tall lithe figure, nearly half a head taller than her husband's, was a striking one among the officers' wives in the commandant's sitting-room. Her olive cheek glowed with a faint illuminating colour; there was something even patrician in her slightly curved nose and high cheek bones, and her smile, rare even in her most excited moments, was, like her brother's, singularly fascinating. The officers evidently thought so too, and when the young lieutenant of the commissary escort, fresh from West Point and Flirtation Walk, gallantly attached himself to her, the ladies were slightly scandalised at the naïve air of *camaraderie* with which Mrs. Lascelles received his attentions. Even Peter was a little disturbed. Only Lascelles, delighted with his wife's animation, and pleased at her success, gazed at her with unqualified admiration. Indeed, he was so satisfied

with her improvement, and so sanguine of her ultimate recovery, that he felt justified in leaving her with her brother and returning to Omaha by the regular mail waggon next day. There was no danger to be apprehended in her accompanying Peter; they would have a full escort; the Reservation lay in a direction unfrequented by marauding tribes; the road was the principal one used by the Government to connect the Fort with the settlements, and well travelled; the officers' wives had often journeyed thither.

The childish curiosity and high spirits which Jenny showed on the journey to the Reservation was increased when she reached it and drew up before the house of the Indian agent. Peter was relieved; he had been anxious and nervous as to any instinctive effect which might be produced on her excitable nature by a first view of her own kinsfolk, although she was still ignorant of her relationship. Her interest and curiosity, however, had nothing abnormal in it. But he was not prepared for the effect produced upon *them* at her first appearance. A few of the braves gathered eagerly around her, and one even addressed her in his own guttural tongue, at which she betrayed a slight feeling of alarm; and Peter saw with satisfaction that she drew close to him. Knowing that his old interpreter and Grey Eagle were of a different and hostile tribe a hundred miles away, and that his secret was safe with them, he simply introduced her as his sister. But he presently found that the braves had added to their curiosity a certain suspiciousness and sullen demeanour, and he was glad to resign his sister into the hands of the agent's wife, while he prosecuted his business of examination and inspection. Later, on his return to the cabin, he was met by the agent, who seemed to be with difficulty suppressing a laugh.

"Your sister is exciting quite a sensation here," he said.

"Do you know that some of these idiotic braves and the Medicine Man insist upon it that she is a *squaw*, and that you're keeping her in captivity against your plighted faith to them! You'll excuse me," he went on with an attempt to recover his gravity, "troubling you with their d—d fool talk, and you won't say anything to *her* about it, but I thought you ought to know it on account of your position among 'em. You don't want to lose their confidence, and you know how easily their skeery faculties are stamped with an idea!"

"Where is she now?" demanded Peter, with a darkening face.

"Somewhere with the squaws, I reckon. I thought she might be a little skeered of the braves, and I've kept them away. *She's* all right, you know; only if you intend to stay here long I'd——"

But Peter was already striding away in the direction of a thicket of cottonwood where he heard the ripple of women's and children's voices. When he had penetrated it, he found his sister sitting on a stump, surrounded by a laughing, gesticulating crowd of young girls and old women, with a tightly swaddled papoose in her lap. Some of them had already half mischievously, half curiously possessed themselves of her dust-cloak, hat, parasol, and gloves, and were parading before her in their grotesque finery, apparently as much to her childish excited amusement as their own. She was even answering their gesticulations with equivalent gestures in her attempt to understand them, and trying amidst shouts of laughter to respond to the monotonous chant of the old women who were zigzagging a dance before her. With the gaily striped blankets lying on the ground, the strings of beads, wampum, and highly coloured feathers hanging from the trees, and the flickering lights and shadows, it was an innocent and even idyllic

picture, but the more experienced Peter saw in the performances only the uncertain temper and want of consecutive idea of playing animals, and the stolid unwinking papoose in his sister's lap gave his sentiment a momentary shock.

Seeing him approach she ran to meet him, the squaws and children slinking away from his grave face. "I have had such a funny time, Peter! Only to think of it! I believe they've never seen men or women with decent clothes before—of course the settlers' wives don't dress much—and I believe they'd have had everything I possess if you hadn't come. But they're *too* funny for anything. It was killing to see them put on my hat wrong side before, and try to make one out of my parasol. But I like them a great deal better than those gloomy chiefs, and I think I understand them almost. And do you know, Peter, somehow I seem to have known them all before. And those dear little papooses, aren't they ridiculously lovely? I only wish——" she stopped, for Peter had somewhat hurriedly taken the Indian boy from her arms and restored it to the frightened mother. A singular change came over her face and she glanced at him quickly. But she resumed, with a heightened colour, "I like it ever so much better here than down at the Fort. And ever so much better than New York. I don't wonder that you like them so much, Peter, and are so devoted to them. Don't be angry, dear, because I let them have my things. I'm sure I never cared particularly for them, and I think it would be such fun to dress as they do. Peter remembered keenly his sudden shock at her precipitate change to bright colours after leaving her novitiate at the "Sacred Heart." "I do hope," she went on eagerly, "that we are going to stay a long time here."

"We are leaving to-morrow," he said curtly. "I find I have urgent business at the Fort."

And they did leave. None too soon, thought Peter and the Indian agent, as they glanced at the faces of the dusky chiefs who had gathered around the cabin. Luckily the presence of their cavalry escort rendered any outbreak impossible, and the stoical taciturnity of the race kept Peter from any verbal insult. But Mrs. Lascelles noticed their lowering dissatisfaction and her eyes flashed. "I wonder you don't punish them," she said simply.

For a few days after their return she did not allude to her visit, and Peter was beginning to think that her late impressions were as volatile as they were childlike. He devoted himself to his Government report, and while he kept up his communications with the Reservation and the agent, for the present domiciled himself at the Fort.

Colonel Bryce, the commandant, though doubtful of civilians, was not slow to appreciate the difference of playing host to a man of Atherly's wealth and position, and even found in Peter's reserve and melancholy an agreeable relief to the somewhat boisterous and material recreations of garrison life, and a gentle check upon the younger officers. For, while Peter did not gamble or drink, there was yet an unobtrusive and gentle dignity in his abstention that relieved him from the attitude of a prig or an "example." Mrs. Lascelles was popular with the officers and accepted more tolerantly by the wives, since they recognised her harmlessness. Once or twice she was found apparently interested in the gesticulations of a few "friendlies" who had penetrated the parade-ground of the Fort to barter beads and wampum. The colonel was obliged at last to caution her against this, as it was found that in her inexperience she had given them certain articles that were contraband of the rules, and finally to stop them from an intrusion which was becoming more frequent and annoying. Left thus to herself, she relieved her isolation by walks beyond the

precincts of the garrison, where she frequently met those "friendly" wanderers, chiefly squaws and children. Here she was again cautioned by the commander—

"Don't put too much faith in those creatures, Mrs. Lascelles."

Jenny elevated her black brows and threw up her arched nose like a charger. "I'm not afraid of old women and children," she said loftily.

"But *I* am," said the colonel gravely. "It's a horrible thing to think of, but these feeble old women and innocent children are always selected to torture the prisoners taken by the braves, and, by Jove, they seem to like it."

Thus restricted, Mrs. Lascelles fell back upon the attentions of Lieutenant Forsyth, whose gallantry was always as fresh as his smart cadet-like tunics, and they took some rides together. Whether it was military caution or the feminine discretion of the colonel's wife—to the quiet amusement of the other officers—a trooper was added to the riding party by the order of the colonel, and thereafter it consisted of three. One night, however, the riders did not appear at dinner, and there was considerable uneasiness mingled with some gossip throughout the garrison. It was already midnight before they arrived, and then with horses blown and trembling with exhaustion, and the whole party bearing every sign of fatigue and disturbance. The colonel said a few sharp decisive words to the subaltern, who, pale and reticent, plucked at his little moustache, but took the whole blame upon himself. *He* and Mrs. Lascelles had, he said, outridden the trooper and got lost; it was late when Cassidy (the trooper) found them, but it was no fault of *his*, and they had to ride at the top of their speed to cover the ground between them and the Fort. It was noticed that Mrs. Lascelles scarcely spoke to Forsyth, and turned abruptly away from the colonel's interrogations and went to her room.

Peter, absorbed in his report, scarcely noticed the incident, nor the singular restraint that seemed to fall upon the little military household for a day or two afterwards. He had accepted the lieutenant's story without comment or question, he knew his own sister too well to believe that she had lent herself to a flirtation with Forsyth, indeed he had rather pitied the young officer when he remembered Lascelles' experience in his early courtship. But he was somewhat astonished one afternoon to find the trooper Cassidy alone in his office.

"*Oi thought oi'd make bould to have a word with ye, sorr,*" he said, recovering from a stiff salute with his fingers nipping the cord of his trousers. "*It's not for meeself, sorr,* although the ould man was harred on me, nor for the leddy, your sister, but for the sake of the leftenant, sorr, who the ould man was harredst on of all. *Oi was of the parrty that rode with your sister.*"

"Yes, yes, I remember; I heard the story," said Peter. "She and Mr. Forsyth got lost."

"*Axin' your pardin, sorr, she didn't.* Mr. Forsyth loid. Loid like an officer and a jintleman—as he is, God bless him—to save a leddy, more betoken your sister, sorr. They never got lost, sorr. We was all three together from the toime we shtarted till we got back, and it's the love av God that we ever got back at all. And it's breaking me heart, sorr, to see *him* goin' round with the black looks of everybody upon him, and he a-twirlin' his moustache and purtendin' not to mind."

"What do you mean?" said Peter uneasily.

"*Oi mane to be tellin' you what happened, sorr,*" said Cassidy stoutly. "When we shtarted out I fell three files to the rear, as became me, so as not to be in the way o' their colloguing, but sorra a bit a stragglin' was there, and I kept them afore me all the toime. When we got to Post

Oak Bottom the leddy pints her whip off to the roight and sez she: 'It's a fine bit of turf there, Misther Forsyth,' invitin' like, and with that she gallops away to the right. The leftenant follys her, and I closed up the rear. So we rides away innoshent like amongst the trees, me thinkin' only it wor a mighty queer place for manovrin', until we seed, jest beyond us in the hollow, the smoke of an Injin camp and a lot of women and childer. And Mrs. Lascelles gets off and goes to discoursin' and blarneyin' with 'em, and I sees Mr. Forsyth glancin' round and lookin' oneasy. Then he goes up and sez something to your sister, and she won't give him a hearin'. And then he tells her she must mount and be off. And she turns upon him, bedad, like a tayger, and bids him be off himself. Then he comes to me and sez he, 'I don't like the look o' this, Cassidy,' sez he, 'the woods behind is full of braves,' sez he. 'Thru for you, listenant,' sez Oi, 'it's into a trap that the ledly hez led us, God save her!' 'Whisht,' he sez; 'take my horse, it's the strongest. Go beside her, and when I say the word lift her up into the saddle before ye, and gallop like blazes. I'll bring up the rear and the other horse.' Wid that we changed horses and cantered up to where she was standing, and he gives the word when she isn't lookin', and Oi grabs her up—she shtruggles like mad but not utterin' a cry—and Oi lites out for the trail agin. And sure enough the braves made as if they would folly, but the listenant throws the reins of her horse over the horn of his saddle, and whips out his revolver and houlds 'em back till I've got well away to the trail again. And then they let fly their arrows, and begorra the next thing a *bullet* whizzes by him. And then he knows they have arrnis with 'em and are 'hostiles,' and he rowls the nearest one over, wheelin' and fightin' and coverin' our retreat till we gets to the road agin. And they daren't folly us out of cover.

Then the lady gets more sinsible, and the listenant pershuades her to mount her horse agin. But before we comes to the Fort he sez to me: 'Cassidy,' sez he, 'not a word o' this on account of the leddy.' And I was mum, sorr, while he was shootin' off his mouth about him bein' lost and all that, and him bein' bullyragged by the kernel, and me knowin' that but for him your sister wouldn't be between these walls here, and Oi wouldn't be talkin' to ye. And shure, sorr, ye might be tellin's the kernel as how the leddy was took by the hysterics, and was that loony that she didn't know whatever she was sayin', and so get the listenant in favour again."

"I will speak with the colonel to-night," said Peter gloomily.

"Lord save yer honour," returned the trooper gratefully, "and if ye could be sayin' that the *leddy* tould you—it would only be the merest taste of a loi ye'd be tellin'—and you'd save me from breakin' me word to the listenant."

"I shall of course speak to my sister first," returned Peter, with a guilty consciousness that he had accepted the trooper's story mainly from his previous knowledge of his sister's character. Nevertheless, in spite of this foregone conclusion, he *did* speak to her. To his surprise she did not deny it. Lieutenant Forsyth—a vain and conceited fool—whose silly attentions she had accepted solely that she might get recreation beyond the Fort—had presumed to tell her what *she* must do! As if *she* was one of those stupid officers' wives or sisters! And it never would have happened if he—Peter—had let her remain at the Reservation with the Indian agent's wife, or if "Charley" (the gentle Lascelles) were here! *He* would have let her go or taken her there. Besides, all the while she was among friends; *his*, Peter's own friends! The people whose cause he was championing! In vain did Peter try to point out to her that these "people"

were still children in mind and impulse, and capable of vacillation or even treachery. He remembered he was talking to a child in mind and impulse, who had shown the same qualities, and in trying to convince her of her danger he felt he was only voicing the common arguments of his opponents.

He spoke also to the colonel, excusing her through her ignorance, her trust in his influence with the savages, and the general derangement of her health. The colonel, relieved of his suspicions of a promising young officer, was gentle and sympathetic—but firm as to Peter's future course. In a moment of caprice and wilfulness she might imperil the garrison as she had her escort, and more than that, she was imperilling Peter's influence with the Indians. Absurd stories had come to his ears regarding the attitude of the Reservation towards him. He thought she ought to return home as quickly as possible. Fortunately an opportunity offered. The general commanding had advised him of the visit to the Fort of a party of English tourists who had been shooting in the vicinity and who were making the Fort the farthest point of their western excursion. There were three or four ladies in the party, and as they would be returning to the line of railroad under escort, she could easily accompany them. This, added Colonel Carter, was also Mrs. Carter's opinion—she was a woman of experience and had a married daughter of her own. In the meantime Peter had better not broach the subject to his sister, but trust to the arrival of the strangers, who would remain for a week, and who would undoubtedly divert Mrs. Lascelles' impossibly mind, and eventually make the proposition more natural and attractive.

In the interval Peter revisited the Reservation and endeavoured to pacify the irritation that had sprung from his previous inspection. The outrage at Post Oak Bottom he

was assured had no relation to the incident at the Reservation, but was committed by some stragglers from other tribes who had not yet accepted the Government bounty, yet had not been thus far classified as "hostile." There had been no "Ghost Dancing" nor other indication of disturbance. The colonel had not deemed it necessary to send out an exemplary force or make a counter demonstration. The incident was allowed to drop. At the Reservation Peter had ignored the previous conduct of the chiefs towards him, had with quiet courage exposed himself fully unarmed and unattended amongst them, and had as fully let it be known that this previous incident was the reason that his sister had not accompanied him on his second visit. He left them at the close of the second day more satisfied in his mind, and perhaps in a more enthusiastic attitude towards his report.

As he came within sound of the sunset bugles, he struck a narrower trail which led to the Fort, through an oasis of oaks and cottonwoods and a small stream or "branch," which afterwards lost itself in the dusty plain. He had already passed a few settlers' cabins, a sutler's shop, and other buildings that had sprung up around this armed nucleus of civilisation—which, in due season, was to become a frontier town. But as yet the brief wood was wild and secluded; frequented only by the women and children of the Fort, within whose protecting bounds it stood, and to whose formal "parade," and trim white and green cottage "quarters," it afforded an agreeable relief. As he rode abstractedly forward under the low cottonwood vault he felt a strange influence stealing over him—an influence that was not only a present experience but at the same time a far-off memory. The concave vault above deepened; the sunset light from the level horizon beyond streamed through the leaves as through the chequers of stained-glass windows;

through the two shafts before him stretched the pillared aisles of Atherly Church! He was riding as in a dream, and when a figure suddenly slipped across his pathway from a column-like tree trunk, he woke with the disturbance and sense of unreality of a dream. For he saw Lady Elfrida standing before him!

It was not a mere memory conjured up by association, for, although the figure, face, and attitude were the same, there were certain changes of costume which the eye of recollection noticed. In place of the smart narrow-brimmed sailor hat he remembered, she was wearing a slouched cavalry hat with a gold cord around its crown, that, with all its becomingness and picturesque audacity, seemed to become characteristic and respectable, as a crest to her refined head and as historic as a Lely canvas. She wore a flannel shirt, belted in at her slight waist with a band of yellow leather, defining her small hips and short straight pleatless skirts that fell to her trim ankles and buckled leather shoes. She was fresh and cool, wholesome and clean, free and unfettered, indeed her beauty seemed only an after-thought or accident. So much so that when Peter saw her afterwards amidst the billowy, gauzy, and challenging graces of the officers' wives, who were dressed in their best and prettiest frocks to welcome her, the eye turned naturally from that suggestion of enhancement to the girl who seemed to defy it. She was clearly not an idealised memory, a spirit or a ghost, but naturalistic and rosy, he thought a trifle rosier as she laughingly addressed him.

"I suppose it isn't quite fair to surprise you like that," she said, with an honest girlish handshake, "for you see I know all about you now and what you are doing here and even when you were expected, and I daresay you thought we were still in England, if you remembered us at all. And we haven't met since that day at Atherly Church when I

put my foot in it—or rather on your pet protégé's, the Indian's—you remember Major Atherly's tomb? And to think that all the while we didn't know that you were a public man and a great political reformer, and had a fad like this. Why, we'd have got up meetings for you, and my father would have presided—he's always fond of doing these things—and we'd have passed resolutions, and given you subscriptions, and Bibles, and flannel shirts, and revolvers, but I believe you draw the line at that. My brother was saying only the other day that you weren't half praised enough for going in for this sort of thing when you were so rich—and needn't care. And so that's why you rushed away from Ashley Grange—just to come here and work out your mission?"

His whole life, his first wild Californian dream, his English visit, the revelation of Grey Eagle, the final collapse of his old beliefs, were whirling through his brain to the music of this clear young voice. And by some cruel irony of circumstance it seemed now to even mock his later dreams of expiation as it also called back his unhappy experience of the last week.

"Have you—have you—" he stammered with a saint smile, "seen my sister?"

"Not yet," said Lady Elfrida. "I believe she is not well and confined to her room, but you will introduce me, won't you?" she added eagerly. "Of course when we heard that there was an Atherly here we inquired about you; and I told them you were a relation of ours," she added with a half-mischievous shyness—"you remember the de Bracys—and they seemed surprised and rather curious. I suppose one does not talk so much about these things over here, and I daresay you have so much to occupy your mind you don't talk of us in England." With the quickness of a refined perception she saw a slight shade in his face, and

changed the subject. "And we have had such a jolly time; we have met so many pleasant people; and they've all been so awfully good to us, from the officials and officers down to the plainest working man. And all so naturally too. So different from us. I sometimes think we have to work ourselves up to be civil to strangers." "No," she went on gaily, in answer to his protesting gesture, and his stammered reminder of his own reception. "No. You came as a sort of kinsman, and Sir Edward knew all about you before he asked you down to the Grange—or even sent over for me from the Towers. No! you Americans take people on their 'face value,' as my brother Reggy says, and we always want to know what are the 'securities.' And then American men are more gallant, though," she added mischievously, "I think you are an exception in that way. Indeed," she went on, "the more I see of your countrymen the less you seem like them. You are more like us—more like an Englishman—indeed, more like an Englishman than most Englishmen—I mean in the matter of reserve and all that sort of thing, you know. It's odd—isn't it? Is your sister like you?"

"You shall judge for yourself," said Peter, with a gaiety that was forced in proportion as his forebodings became more gloomy. Would his sister's peculiarities—even her secret—be safe from the clear eyes of the young girl?

"I know I shall like her," said Lady Elfrida simply. "I mean to make friends with her before we leave, and I hope to see a great deal of her; and," she said with a naïve *non-sequitur*, that, however, had its painful significance to Peter, "I do want you to show me some Indians—your Indians, you know—*your* friends. I've seen some of them, of course; I am afraid I am a little prejudiced, for I did not like them. You see my taste has to be educated, I suppose—but I thought them so foolishly vain and presuming."

"That is their perfect childishness," said Peter quickly. "It is not, I believe, considered a moral defect," he added bitterly.

Lady Elfrida laughed, and yet at the same moment a look of appeal that was in itself quite as childlike shone in her blue eyes. "There I have blundered again, I know—but I told you I have such ridiculous prejudices! And I really want to like them as you do. Only," she laughed again, "it seems strange that *you*, of all men, should have interested yourself in people so totally different to you. But what will be the result if your efforts are successful? Will they remain a distinct race? Will you make citizens, soldiers, congress-men, governors of them? Will they intermarry with the whites? Is that a part of your plan? I hope not!"

It was a part of Peter's sensitive excitement that even through the unconscious irony of this speech he was noticing the difference between the young English girl's evident interest in a political problem and the utter indifference of his own country-women. Here was a girl scarcely out of her teens, with no pretension to being a blue stocking, with half the *aplomb* of an American girl of her own age, gravely considering a question of political economy. Oddly enough, it added to his other irritation, and he said almost abruptly, "Why not?"

She took the question literally and with a little youthful timidity. "But these mixed races never attain to anything, do they? I thought that was understood. But," she added with a feminine quickness—"and I suppose it's again only a *personal* argument—but *you* wouldn't like your sister to have married an Indian, would you?"

The irony of the situation had reached its climax to Peter. It didn't seem to be his voice that said, "I can answer by an argument still more personal. I have even thought myself of marrying an Indian woman."

It seemed to him that what he said was irrevocable, but he was desperate. It seemed to him that in a moment more he would have told her his whole secret. But the young girl drew back from him with a slight start of surprise. There may have been something in the tone of his voice and in his manner that verged upon a seriousness she was never contemplating in her random talk, it may have been an uneasiness of some youthful imprudence in pressing the subject upon a man of his superiority, and that his abrupt climax was a rebuke. But it was only for a moment: her youthful buoyancy, and above all, a certain common sense that was not incompatible to her high nature, came to her rescue. "But that," she said with quick mischievousness, "would be a *sacrifice* taken in the interests of these people, don't you see, and being a sacrifice it's no argument."

Peter saw his mistake, but there was something so innocent and delightful in the youthful triumph of this red-lipped logician that he was forced to smile. I have said that his smile was rare and fascinating, a concession wrung from his dark face and calm beardless lips that most people found irresistible, but it was odd, nevertheless, that Lady Elfrida now for the first time felt a sudden and not altogether unpleasant embarrassment over the very subject she had approached with such innocent fearlessness. There was a new light in her eyes, a fresher colour in her cheeks as she turned her face—she knew not why—away from him. But it enabled her to see a figure approaching them from the Fort. And I grieve to say that, perhaps for the first time in her life, Lady Elfrida was guilty of an affected start.

"Oh, here's Reggy coming to look for me. I'd quite forgotten, but I'm so glad. I want you to know my brother Reggy. He was always so sorry he missed you at the Grange."

The tall, young, good-looking brown Englishman who

had sauntered up bestowed a far more critical glance upon Peter's horse than upon Peter, nevertheless grasped his hand heartily as his sister introduced him. Perhaps both men were equally undemonstrative, although the reserve of one was from temperament, and the other from education. Nevertheless Lord Reginald remarked with a laugh that it was awfully jolly to be there, and that it had been a beastly shame that he was in Scotland when Atherly was at the Grange. That none of them had ever suspected till they came to the Fort that he, Atherly, was one of those Government chappies, and so awfully keen on Indian politics. "Freddy" had been the first to find it out, but they thought she was chaffing. At which "Freddy," who had suddenly resolved herself into the youthfulest of schoolgirls in the presence of her brother, put her parasol like an Indian club behind her back, and still rosy, beamed admiringly upon Reggy. Then the three, Peter leading his horse, moved on towards the Fort, presently meeting "Georgy," the six-foot Guardsman cousin in extraordinary tweeds and flannel shirt; Lord Runnybroke, uncle of "Freddy," middle-aged and flannel-shirted, a mighty hunter; Lady Runnybroke in a brown duster, but with a stately head that suggested ostrich feathers; Moyler-Spence, M.P., with an eyeglass, and the Hon. Evelyn Kayne, closely attended by the always gallant Lieutenant Forsyth. Peter began to feel a nervous longing to be alone on the burning plain and the empty horizon beyond them, until he could readjust himself to these new conditions, and glanced half-wearily around him. But his eye met "Freddy's," who seemed to have evoked this gathering with a wave of her parasol, like the fairy of a pantomime, and he walked on in silence.

A day or two of unexpected pleasure passed for Peter. In these new surroundings he found he could separate Lady Elfrida from his miserable past, and the conventional

restraint of Ashley Grange. Again, the revelation of her familiar name "Freddy" seemed to make her more accessible and human to him than her formal title, and suited the girlish simplicity that lay at the foundation of her character, of which he had seen so little before. At least so he fancied, and so excused himself; it was delightful to find her referring to him as an older friend, pleasant, indeed, to see that her family tacitly recognised it, and frequently appealed to him with the introduction "'Freddy' says you can tell us,' or 'You and 'Freddy' had better arrange it between you.'" Even the dreaded introduction of his sister was an agreeable surprise, owing to Lady Elfrida's frank and sympathetic prepossession, which Jenny could not resist. In a few moments they were walking together in serious and apparently confidential conversation. For to Peter's wonder it was the "Lady Elfrida" side of the English girl's nature that seemed to have attracted Jenny, and not the playfulness of "Freddy," and he was delighted to see that the young girl had assumed a grave chaperonship of the tall Mrs. Lascelles that would have done credit to Mrs. Carter or Lady Runnybroke. Had he been less serious he might have been amused too at the importance of his own position in the military outpost, through the arrival of the strangers. That this grave political enthusiast and civilian should be on familiar terms with a young Englishwoman of rank was at first inconceivable to the officers. And that he had never alluded to it before seemed to them still more remarkable.

Nevertheless there was much liveliness and good fellowship at the Fort. Captains and lieutenants down to the youngest "cub," Forsyth, vied with each other to please the Englishmen, supplied them with that characteristic American humour and anecdote which it is an Englishman's privilege to bring away with him, and were picturesquely

and chivalrously devoted in their attentions to the ladies, who were pleased and amused by it, though it is to be doubted if it increased their respect for the giver, although they were more grateful for it than the average American woman. Lady Elfrida found the officers very entertaining and gallant. Accustomed to the English officer and his somewhat bored way of treating his profession and his duties, she may have been amused at the zeal, earnestness, and enthusiasm of these youthful warriors, who aspired to appear as nothing but soldiers, when she contrasted them with her Guardsmen relatives who aspired to be everything else but that; but she kept it to herself. It was a recognised, respectable, and even superior occupation for gentlemen in England: what it might be in America—who knows? She certainly found Peter, the civilian, more attractive, for there really was nothing English to compare him with, and she had something of the same feeling in her friendship for Jenny, except the patronage which Jenny seemed to solicit, and perhaps require, as a foreigner.

One afternoon the English guests, accompanied by a few of their hosts and a small escort, were making a shooting expedition to the vicinity of Green Spring, when Peter, plunged in his report, looked up to find his sister entering his office. Her face was pale, and there was something in her expression which reawakened his old anxiety. Nevertheless he smiled and said gently—

“Why are you not enjoying yourself with the others?”

“I have a headache,” she said languidly, “but,” lifting her eyes suddenly to his, “why are *you* not? You are their good friend, you know—even their relation.”

“No more than you are,” he returned, with affected gaiety. “But look at the report, it is only half finished! I have already been shirking it for them.”

“You mustn’t let your devotion to the Indians keep you

from your older friends," said Mrs. Lascelles, with an odd laugh. "But you never told me about these people before, Peter; tell me now. They were very kind to you, weren't they, on account of your relationship?"

"Entirely on account of that," said Peter, with a sudden bitterness he could not repress. "But they are very pleasant," he added quickly, "and very simple and unaffected, in spite of their rank—perhaps I ought to say *because* of it."

"You mean they are kind to us because they feel themselves superior—just as you are kind to the Indians, Peter."

"I am afraid they have no such sense of political equality towards us, Jenny, as impels me to be just to the Indian," he said, with affected lightness. "But Lady Elfrida sympathises with the Indians—very much."

"She!" The emphasis which his sister put upon the personal pronoun was unmistakable, but Peter ignored it, and so apparently did she, as she said the next moment in a different voice, "She's very pretty, don't you think?"

"Very," said Peter coldly.

There was a long pause. Peter slightly fingered one of the sheets of his delayed report on his desk. His sister looked up. "I'm afraid I'm as bad as Lady Elfrida in keeping you from your Indians; but I had something to say to you. No matter, another time will do, when you're not so busy."

"Please go on now," said Peter, with affected unconcern, yet with a feeling of uneasiness creeping over him.

"It was only this," said Jenny, seating herself with her elbow on the desk and her chin in a cup-like hollow of her hand: "did you ever think that in the interests of these poor Indians, you know, purely for the sake of your belief in them, and just to show that you were above vulgar prejudices—did you ever think you could marry one of them?"

Two thoughts flashed quickly on Peter's mind—first, that

Lady Elfrida had repeated something of their conversation to his sister; secondly, that some one had told her of "Little Daybreak." Each was equally disturbing. But he recovered himself quickly and said, "I might if I thought it was required. But even a sacrifice is not always an example."

"Then you think it would be a sacrifice?" she said, slowly raising her dark eyes to his.

"If I did something against received opinion, against precedent, and for aught I know against even the prejudices of those I wish to serve, however lofty my intention was and however great the benefit to them in the end, it would still be a sacrifice in the present." He saw his own miserable logic and affected didactics, but he went on lightly, "But why do you ask such a question? You haven't any one in your mind for me, have you?"

She had risen thoughtfully and was moving towards the door. Suddenly she turned with a quick, odd vivacity. "Perhaps I had. O Peter, there was such a lovely little squaw I saw the last time I was at Oak Bottom! She was no darker than I am, but so beautiful. Even in her little cotton gown and blanket, with only a string of beads around her throat, she was as pretty as any one here. And I dare-say she could be educated and appear as well as any white woman. I should so like to have you see her. I would have tried to bring her to the Fort, but the braves are very jealous of their wives or daughters seeing white men, you know, and I was afraid of the colonel."

She had spoken volubly and with a strange excitement, but even at the moment her face changed again, and as she left the office, with a quick laugh and parting gesture, there were tears in her eyes.

Accustomed to her moods and caprices, Peter thought little of the intrusion, relieved as he was of his first fears.

She had come to him from loneliness and curiosity, and perhaps, he thought with a sad smile, from a little sisterly jealousy of the young girl who had evinced such an interest in him, and had known him before. He took up his pen and continued the interrupted paragraph of his report.

"I am satisfied that much of the mischievous and extravagant prejudice against the half-breed and all alliances of the white and red races springs from the ignorance of the frontiersman and his hasty generalisation of facts. There is no doubt that an intermixture of blood brings out purely superficial contrasts the more strongly, and that against the civilising habits and even costumes of the half-breed certain Indian defects appear the more strongly, as in the case of the colour line of the quadroon and octoroon, but it must not be forgotten that these are only the contrasts of specific improvement, and the inference that the borrowed defects of a half-breed exceed the original defects of the full-blooded aborigine is utterly illogical." He stopped suddenly and laid down his pen with a heightened colour; the bugle had blown, the guard was turning out to receive the commandant and his returning party, among whom was "Freddy."

Through the illusions of depression and distance the "sink" of Butternut Creek seemed only an encrustation of blackish moss on the dull grey plain. It was not until one approached within half a mile of it that it resolved itself into a copse of butternut trees sunken below the distant levels. Here once, in geological story, the waters of Butternut Creek, despairing of ever crossing the leagues of arid waste before them, had suddenly disappeared in the providential interposition of an area of looser soil, and so given up the effort and the ghost for ever, their grave being marked by the Butternut copse, chance-sown by bird

or beast in the saturated ground. In Indian legend the "Sink" commemorated the equally providential escape of a great tribe who, surrounded by enemies, appealed to the Great Spirit for protection, and was promptly conveyed by subterraneous passages to the banks of the Great River a hundred miles away. Its outer edges were already invaded by the dust of the plain, but within them ran cool recesses, a few openings, and the ashes of some long-forgotten camp fires. To-day its sombre shadows were relieved by bright-coloured dresses, the jackets of the drivers of a large sutler's waggon, whose white canvas head marked the entrance of the copse, and all the paraphernalia of a picnic. It was a party gotten up by the foreign guests to the ladies of the Fort, prepared and arranged by the active Lady Elfrida, assisted by the only gentleman of the party, Peter Atherly, who from his acquaintance with the locality was allowed to accompany them. The other gentlemen, who with a large party of officers and soldiers were shooting in the vicinity, were sufficiently near for protection. They would rejoin the ladies later.

"It does not seem in the least as if we were miles away from any town or habitation," said Lady Runnybroke, complacently seating herself on a stump, "and I shouldn't be surprised to see a church tower through those trees. It's very like the hazel copse at Longworth, you know. Not at all what I expected."

"For the matter of that neither are the Indians," said the Hon. Evelyn Kayne. "Did you ever see such grotesque creatures, in their cast-off boots and trousers? They're no better than gipsies. I wonder what Mr. Atherly can find in them."

"And he a rich man too—they say he's got a mine in California worth a million—to take up a craze like this," added the lively Mrs. Captain Joyce, "that's what gets me!"

You know," she went on confidentially, "that cranks and reformers are always poor—it's quite natural; but I don't see what he—a rich man—expects to make by his reforms, I'm sure."

"He'll get over it in time," said the Hon. Evelyn Kayne, "they all do. At least he expects to get the reforms he wants in a year, and then he's coming over to England again."

"Indeed, how very nice," responded Lady Runnybroke quickly. "Did he say so?"

"No. But 'Freddy' says he is."

The two officers' wives glanced at each other. Lady Runnybroke put up her eyeglass in default of ostrich feathers and said didactically, "I'm sure Mr. Atherly is very much in earnest, and sincerely devoted to his work. And in a man of his wealth and position here it's most estimable. My dear," she said, getting up and moving towards Mrs. Lascelles, "we were just saying how good and unselfish your brother was in his work for these poor people."

But Jenny Lascelles must have been in one of those abstracted moods which so troubled her husband, for she seemed to be staring straight before her into the recesses of the wood. In her there was a certain resemblance to the attitude of a listening animal.

"I wish Mr. Atherly was a little more unselfish to *us* poor people," said the Hon. Evelyn Kayne, "for he and 'Freddy' have been nearly an hour looking for a place to spread our luncheon baskets. I wish they'd leave the future of the brown races to look after itself and look a little more after *us*. I'm famished."

"I fancy they find it difficult to select a clear space for so large a party as we will be when the gentlemen come in," returned Lady Runnybroke, glancing in the direction of Jenny's abstracted eyes.

"I suppose you must feel like chicken and salad, too, Lady Runnybroke," suggested Mrs. Captain Joyce.

"I don't think I quite know *how* chicken and salad feel, dear," said Lady Runnybroke with a puzzled air, "but if that's one of your husband's delightful American stories, do tell us. I never *can* get Runnybroke to tell me any, although he roars over them all. And I daresay he gets them all wrong. But look, here comes our luncheon."

Peter and Lady Elfrida were advancing towards them. The scrutiny of a dozen pairs of eyes, wondering, mischievous, critical, impertinent, or resentful, would have been a trying ordeal to any errant couple. But there was little if any change in Peter's grave and gentle demeanour, albeit his dark eyes were shining with a peculiar light, and Lady Elfrida had only the animation, colour, and slight excitability that became the responsible leader of the little party. They neither apologised nor alluded to their delay. They had selected a spot on the other side of the copse, and the baskets could be sent around by the waggon ; they had seen a slight haze on the plain towards the east which betokened the vicinity of the rest of the party, and they were about to propose that as the gentlemen were so near they had better postpone the picnic until they came up. Lady Runnybroke smiled affably : the only thing she had noticed was that Lady Elfrida in joining them had gone directly to the side of the abstracted Jenny and placed her arm around her waist. At which Lady Runnybroke airily joined them.

The surmises of Peter and "Freddy" appeared to be correct. The transfer of the provisions and the party to the other side was barely concluded before they could see the gentlemen coming ; they were riding a little more rapidly than when they had set out, and were arriving fully three hours before their time. They burst upon the ladies a little boisterously but gaily ; they had had a glorious time, but

little sport ; they had hurried back to join the ladies so as to be able to return with them betimes. They were ravenously hungry—they wanted to fall to at once. Only the officers' wives noticed that the two files of troopers *did not dismount*, but filed slowly before the entrance to the woods. Lady Elfrida as hostess was prettily distressed by it, but was told by Captain Joyce that it was "against rules," and that she could "feed" them at the Fort. The officers' wives put a few questions in whispers and were promptly frowned down. Nevertheless the luncheon was a successful festivity ; the gentlemen were loud in the praises of their gracious hostess ; the delicacies she had provided by express from distant stations, and much that was distinctly English and despoiled from her own stores, were gratefully appreciated by the officers of a remote frontier garrison. Lady Elfrida's health was toasted by the gallant colonel in a speech that was the soul of chivalry. Lord Runnybroke responded, perhaps without the American *abandon*, but with the steady conscientiousness of an hereditary legislator, but the M.P. summed up a slightly exaggerated but well-meaning episode by pointing out that it was on occasions like this that the two nations showed their common ancestry by standing side by side. Only one thing troubled the rosy, excited, but still clear-headed "Freddy" : the plates were whisked away like magic after each delicacy by the military servants and vanished, the tables were in the same mysterious way cleared as rapidly as they were set, and any attempt to recall a dish was met by the declaration that it was already packed away in the waggon. As they at last rose from the actually empty board, and saw even the tables disappear, Lady Elfrida plaintively protested that she felt as if she had been presiding over an Arabian Nights entertainment, served by Genii, and she knew that they would all awaken hungry when they were well on their way back. Nevertheless, in spite of this expe-

dition, the officers lounged about smoking until every trace of the festivity had vanished. Reggy found himself standing near Peter. "You know," he said confidentially, "I don't think the colonel has a very high opinion of your pets—the Indians. And, by Jove! if the 'Friendlies' are as nasty towards you as they were to us this morning, I wonder what you call the 'hostile' tribes."

"Did you have any difficulty with them?" said Peter quickly.

"No—not exactly, don't you know, we were too many, I fancy, but, by Jove! the beggars whenever we met them—and we met one or two gipsy bands of them—you know, they seemed to look upon us as *trespassers*, don't you know."

"And you were, in point of fact," said Peter, smiling grimly.

"Oh, I say, come now!" said Reggy, opening his eyes. After a moment he laughed. "Oh yes, I see—of course, looking at it from their point of view. By Jove, I dare-say the beggars were right, you know; all the same—don't you see—*your* people were poaching too."

"So we were," said Peter gravely.

But here, at a word from the major, the whole party debouched from the woods. Everything appeared to be awaiting them—the large covered carry-all for the guests, and the two saddle horses for Mrs. Lascelles and Lady Elfrida, who had ridden there together. Peter, also mounted, accompanied the carry-all with two of the officers, the troopers and waggons brought up the rear.

It was very hot, with little or no wind. On this part of the plain the dust seemed lighter and finer, and rose with the wheels of the carry-all and the horses of the escort, trailing a white cloud over the cavalcade like the smoke of an engine over a train. It was with difficulty the troopers could be kept from opening out on both sides of the high-

way to escape it. The whole atmosphere seemed charged with it: it even appeared in a long bank to the right, rising and obscuring the declining sun. But they were already within sight of the Fort and the little copse beside it. Then trooper Cassidy trotted up to the colonel, who was riding in a dusty cloud beside the carry-all—"Captain Fleetwood's compliments, sir, and there are two stragglers—Mrs. Lascelles and the English lady." He pointed to the rapidly flying figures of Jenny and "Freddy" making towards the wood.

The colonel made a movement of impatience. "Tell Mr. Forsyth to bring them back at once," he said.

But here a feminine chorus of excuses and expostulations rose from the carry-all. "It's only Mrs. Lascelles going to show 'Freddy' where the squaws and children bathe," said Lady Runnybroke: "it's near the Fort, and they'll be there as quick as we shall."

"One moment, colonel," said Peter with mortified concern. "It's another folly of my sister's! pray let me take it upon myself to bring them back."

"Very well, but see you don't linger, and," turning to Cassidy as Peter galloped away, he added, "you follow him."

Peter kept the figures of the two women in view, but presently saw them disappear in the wood. He had no fear for their safety, but he was indignant at this last untimely caprice of his sister. He knew the idea had originated with her, and that the officers knew it, and yet she had made Lady Elfrida bear an equal share of the blame. He reached the edge of the copse, entered the first opening, but he had scarcely plunged into its shadow and shut out the plain behind him before he felt his arms and knees quickly seized from behind. So sudden and unexpected was the attack that he first thought his horse had stumbled against a coil of wild grape vine and was

entangled, but the next moment he smelt the rank characteristic odour and saw the brown limbs of the Indian who had leaped on his crupper, while another rose at his horse's head. Then a warning voice in his ear said in the native tongue—

“If the great white medicine man calls to his fighting men, the pale-face girl and the squaw he calls his sister die! They are here, he understands.”

But Peter had neither struggled nor uttered a cry. At that touch, and with the accents of that tongue in his ears, all his own Indian blood seemed to leap and tingle through his veins. His eyes flashed, pinioned as he was he drew himself erect, and answered haughtily in his captor's own speech—

“Good! The great white medicine man obeys. For he and his sister have no fear. But if the pale-face girl is not sent back to her people before the sun sets, then the yellow jackets will swarm the woods, and they will follow her trail to the death. My brother is wise, let the girl go. I have spoken.”

“My brother is very cunning too. He would call to his fighting men through the lips of the pale-face girl.”

“He will not. The great white medicine man does not lie to his red brother. He will tell the pale-face girl to say to the chief of the yellow jackets that he and his sister are with his brothers, and all is peace. But the pale-face girl must not see the great white medicine man in these bonds, nor as a captive! I have spoken.”

The two Indians fell back. There was so much of force and dignity in the man, so much of their own stoic calmness, that they at once mechanically loosened the thongs of plaited deer-hide with which they had bound him, and side by side led him into the recesses of the wood.

There was some astonishment, although little alarm, at

the Fort when Lady Elfrida returned accompanied by the orderly who had followed Peter to the wood, but without Peter and his sister. The reason given was perfectly natural and conceivable. Mrs. Lascelles had preceded Lady Elfrida in entering the wood and taken another opening, so that Lady Elfrida had found herself suddenly lost, and surrounded by two or three warriors in dreadful paint. They motioned her to dismount, and said something she did not understand, but she declined, knowing that she had heard Mr. Atherly and the orderly following her, and feeling no fear. And sure enough Mr. Atherly presently came up with a couple of braves, apologised to her for their mistake, but begged her to return to the Fort at once and assure the colonel that everything was right, and that he and his sister were safe. He was perfectly cool and collected and like himself; she blushed slightly, as she said she thought that he wished to impress upon her, for some reason she could not understand, that he did not want the colonel to send any assistance. She was positive of that. She told her story unexcitedly, it was evident that she had not been frightened, but Lady Runnybroke noticed that there was a shade of anxious abstraction in her face.

When the officers were alone the colonel took hurried counsel of them. "I think," said Captain Fleetwood, "that Lady Elfrida's story quite explains itself. I believe this affair is purely a local one, and has nothing whatever to do with the suspicious appearances we noticed this afternoon, or the presence of so large a body of Indians near Butternut. Had this been a hostile movement they would have scarcely allowed so valuable a capture as Lady Elfrida to escape them."

"Unless they kept Atherly and his sister as a hostage," said Captain Joyce.

"But Atherly is one of their friends, indeed he is their

mediator and apostle, a non-combatant, and has their confidence," returned the colonel. "It is much more reasonable to suppose that Atherly has noticed some disaffection among these 'friendlies,' and he fears that our sending a party to his assistance might precipitate a collision. Or he may have reason to believe that this stopping of the two women under the very walls of the Fort is only a feint to draw our attention from something more serious. Did he know anything of our suspicions of the conduct of those Indians this morning?"

"Not unless he gathered it from what Lord Reginald foolishly told him. Of course, *we* said nothing," returned Captain Fleetwood, with a soldier's habitual distrust of the wisdom of the civil arm.

"That will do, gentlemen," said the colonel, as the officers dispersed. "Send Cassidy here."

The colonel was alone on the verandah as Cassidy came up.

"You followed Mr. Atherly to-day?"

"Yes, sorr."

"And you saw him when he gave the message to the young lady?"

"Yes, sorr."

"Did you form any opinion, from anything else you saw, of his object in sending that message?"

"Only from what I saw of *him*."

"Well, what was that?"

"I saw him look asther the young leddy as she rode away, and then wheel about and go straight back into the wood."

"And what did you think of that?" said the colonel, with a half-smile.

"I thought it was a shacrifice, sorr."

"What do you mean?" said the colonel sharply.

"I mean, sorr," said Cassidy stoutly, "that he was givin' up hisself and his sister for that young leddy."

The colonel looked at the sergeant. "Ask Mr. Forsyth to come to me privately, and return here with him."

As darkness fell, some half-a-dozen dismounted troopers, headed by Forsyth and Cassidy, passed quietly out of the lower gate and entered the wood. An hour later the colonel was summoned from the dinner table, and the guests heard the quick rattle of a waggon turning out of the road gate—but the colonel did not return. An undefinable uneasiness crept over the little party, which reached its climax in the summoning of the other officers—and the sudden flashing out of news. The reconnoitring party had found the dead bodies of Peter Atherly and his sister on the plains at the edge of the empty wood.

The women were gathered in the commandant's quarters, and for the moment seemed to have been forgotten. The officers' wives talked with professional sympathy and disciplined quiet; the English ladies were equally sympathetic, but collected. Lady Elfrida, rather white, but patient, asked a few questions in a voice whose contralto was rather deepened. One and all wished to "do something"—anything "to help"—and one and all rebelled that the colonel had begged them to remain within doors. There was an occasional quick step on the verandah or the clatter of a hoof on the parade, a continual but subdued murmur from the white-washed barracks, but everywhere a sense of keen restraint.

When they emerged on the verandah again, the whole aspect of the garrison seemed to have changed in that brief time. In the faint moonlight they could see motionless files of troopers filling the parade, the officers in belted tunic and slouched hats—but not apparently the same men; the half-lounging ease and lazy dandyism gone, a grim

tension in all their faces, a set abstraction in all their acts. Then there was the rolling of heavy wheels in the road, and the two horses of the ambulance appeared. The sentries presented arms; the colonel took off his hat; the officers uncovered; the waggon wheeled into the parade; the surgeon stepped out. He exchanged a single word with the colonel and lifted the curtain of the ambulance.

As the colonel glanced within, a deep but embarrassed voice fell upon his ear. He turned quickly. It was Lord Reginald, flushed and sympathetic.

"He was a friend—a relation of ours, you know," he stammered. "My sister would like—to look at him again."

"Not now," said the colonel in a low voice. The surgeon added something in a voice still lower, which scarcely reached the verandah.

Lord Reginald turned away with a white face.

"Fall back there!" Captain Fleetwood rode up.

"All ready, sir."

"One moment, captain," said the colonel quietly. "File your first half-company before that ambulance, and bid the men look in."

The singular order was obeyed. The men filed slowly forward, each in turn halting before the motionless waggon and its immobile freight. They were men inured to frontier bloodshed and savage warfare; some halted and hurried on; others lingered, others turned to look again. One man burst into a short laugh, but when the others turned indignantly upon him they saw that in his face that held them in awe. What they saw in the ambulance did not transpire; what they felt was not known. Strangely enough, however, what they repressed themselves was mysteriously communicated to their horses, who snorted and quivered with eagerness and impatience as they rode back again. The horse of the trooper who had laughed almost leaped

into the air. Only Sergeant Cassidy was communicative ; he took a larger circuit in returning to his place, and managed to lean over and whisper hoarsely in the ear of a camp-follower spectator : "Tell the young leddy that the torturin' divvils couldn't take the smile off him !"

The little column filed out of the gateway into the road. As Captain Fleetwood passed Colonel Carter the two men's eyes met. The colonel said quietly, "Good night, captain. Let us have a good report from you."

The captain replied only with his gauntleted hand against the brim of his slouched hat, but the next moment his voice was heard strong and clear enough in the road. The little column trotted away as evenly as on parade. But those who climbed the roof of the barracks a quarter of an hour later saw, in the moonlight, a white cloud drifting rapidly across the plain towards the West. It was a small cloud in that bare, menacing, cruel, and illimitable waste ; but in its breast was crammed a thunderbolt.

It fell thirty miles away, blasting and scattering a thousand warriors and their camp, giving and taking no quarter, vengeful, exterminating, and complete. Later there were different opinions about it and the horrible crime that had provoked it ; the opposers of Peter's policy jubilant over the irony of the assassination of the Apostle of Peace ; Peter's disciples as actively deplored the merciless and indiscriminating vengeance of the military, and so the problem that Peter had vainly attempted to solve was left an open question. There were those two who believed that Peter had never sacrificed himself and his sister for the sake of another, but had provoked and incensed the savages by the blind arrogance of a reformer. There were wild stories by scouts and interpreters how he had challenged his fate by an Indian bravado, how himself and his sister had met torture with an Indian stoicism, and how

the Indian braves themselves at last in a turmoil of revolution had dipped their arrows and lances in the heroic heart's blood of their victims, and worshipped their still palpitating flesh.

But there was one honest loyal little heart that carried back—three thousand miles—to England the man as it had known and loved him. Lady Elfrida Runnybroke never married; neither did she go into retirement, but lived her life and fulfilled her duties in her usual clear-eyed fashion. She was particularly kind to all Americans—barring, I fear, a few pretty-faced, finely frocked title-hunters—told stories of the Far West and had theories of a people of which they knew little, cared less, and believed to be vulgar. But I think she found a new pleasure in the old church at Ashley Grange, and loved to linger over the effigy of the old Crusader—her kinsman, the swashbuckler De Bracy—with a vague but pretty belief that devotion and love do not die with brave men, but live and flourish even in lands beyond the seas.

Two Americans.

PERHAPS if there was anything important in the migration of the Maynard family to Europe it rested solely upon the singular fact that Mr. Maynard did not go there in the expectation of marrying his daughter to a nobleman. A Charleston merchant, whose house represented two honourable generations, had, thirty years ago, a certain self-respect which did not require extraneous aid and foreign support, and it is exceedingly probable that his intention of spending a few years abroad had no ulterior motive than pleasure-seeking and the observation of many things—principally of the past—which his own country did not possess. His future and that of his family lay in his own land, yet, with practical common sense he adjusted himself temporarily to his new surroundings. In doing so he had much to learn of others, and others had something to learn of him; he found that the best people had a high simplicity equal to his own; he corrected their impressions, that a Southerner had more or less negro blood in his veins, and that although a slave-owner he did not necessarily represent an aristocracy. With a distinguishing dialect of which he was not ashamed, a frank familiarity of approach joined to an invincible courtesy of manner, which made even his Republican "Sir" equal to the ordinary address to royalty, he was always respected and seldom misunderstood. When he was—it was unfortunate for those who misunderstood him. His type was as distinctive and

original as his cousin's, the Englishman, whom it was not the fashion then to imitate. So that whether in the hotel of a capital, the Kursaal of a Spa, or the humbler pension of a Swiss village, he was always characteristic. Less so was his wife, who, with the chameleon quality of her transplanted countrywomen, was already Parisian in dress; still less so his daughter, who had by this time absorbed the peculiarities of her French, German, and Italian governesses. Yet neither had yet learned to evade their nationality—or apologise for it.

Mr. Maynard and his family remained for three years in Europe, his stay having been prolonged by political excitement in his own State of South Carolina. Commerce is apt to knock the insularity out of people; distance from one's own distinctive locality gives a wider range to the vision, and the retired merchant foresaw ruin in his State's politics, and from the view-point of all Europe beheld, instead of the usual collection of individual States—his whole country. But the excitement increasing, he was finally impelled to return in a faint hope of doing something to allay it—taking his wife with him, but leaving his daughter at school in Paris. At about this time, however, a single cannon-shot fired at the national flag on Fort Sumter shook the whole country, reverberated even in Europe, sending some earnest hearts back to do battle for State or country, sending others less earnest into inglorious exile, but, saddest of all! knocking over the school-bench of a girl at the Paris *pensionnat*. For that shot had also sunk Maynard's ships at the Charleston wharves, scattered his piled cotton-bales awaiting shipment at the quays, and drove him, a ruined man, into the "Home Guard" against his better judgment. Helen Maynard, like a good girl, had implored her father to let her return and share his risks. But the answer was "to wait" until this nine days' madness

of an uprising was over. That madness lasted six years, outlived Maynard, whose grey, misdoubting head bit the dust at Ball's Bluff; outlived his colourless widow, and left Nelly a penniless orphan.

Yet enough of her country was left in her to make her courageous and independent of her past. They say that when she got the news she cried a little, and then laid the letter and what was left of her last monthly allowance in Madame Ablas' lap. Madame was devastated. "But you, impoverished and desolated angel, what of you?" "I shall get some of it back," said the desolated angel with ingenuous candour, "for I speak better French and English than the other girls, and I shall teach *them* until I can get into the Conservatoire, for I have a voice. You yourself have told papa so." From such angelic directness there was no appeal. Madame Ablas had a heart—more, she had a French manageress's discriminating instinct. The American schoolgirl was installed in a teacher's desk; her bosom friends and fellow-students became her pupils. To some of the richest, and they were mainly of her own country, she sold her smartest, latest dresses, jewels, and trinkets at a very good figure, and put the money away against the Conservatoire in the future. She worked hard, she endured patiently everything but commiseration. "I'd have you know, miss," she said to Miss de Laine, daughter of the famous house of Musslin, de Laine, & Co., of New York, "that whatever my position *here* may be it is not one to be patronised by a tape-seller's daughter. My case is not such a very 'sad one,' thank you, and I prefer not to be spoken of as having seen 'better days' by people who haven't. There! Don't rap your desk with your pencil when you speak to me, or I shall call out 'Cash!' before the whole class." So regrettable an exhibition of temper naturally alienated certain of her compatriots who were unduly sensitive of their origin, and as

they formed a considerable colony who were then revelling in the dregs of the Empire and the last orgies of a tottering Court, eventually cost her her place. A Republican so aristocratic was not to be tolerated by the true-born Americans who paid court to De Morny for the phosphorescent splendours of St. Cloud and the Tuileries, and Miss Helen lost their favour. But she had already saved enough money for the Conservatoire and a little attic in a very tall house in a very narrow street that trickled into the ceaseless flow of the Rue Lafayette. Here for four years she trotted backwards and forwards regularly to her work with the freshness of youth and the inflexible set purpose of maturity. Here, rain or shine, summer or winter, in the mellow season when the large cafés expanded under the white sunshine into an overflow of little tables on the pavement, or when the red glow of the *Brasserie* shone through frosty panes on the turned-up collars of pinched Parisians who hurried by, she was always to be seen.

Half Paris had looked into her clear grey eyes and passed on ; a smaller and not very youthful portion of Paris had turned and followed her with small advantage to itself and happily no fear to her. For even in her young womanhood she kept her child's loving knowledge of that great city ; she even had an innocent *camaraderie* with street-sweepers, kiosk-keepers, and lemonade vendors, and the sternness of conciergedom melted before her. In this wholesome, practical child's experience she naturally avoided or overlooked what would not have interested a child, and so kept her freshness and a certain national shrewd simplicity invincible. 'There is a story told of her girlhood that, one day playing in the Tuileries gardens, she was approached by a gentleman with a waxed moustache and a still more waxen cheek beneath his heavy-lidded eyes. There was an exchange of polite amenities.

"And your name, *ma petite*?"

"Helen," responded the young girl naively—"what's yours?"

"Ah," said the kind gentleman, gallantly pulling at his moustache, "if you are Helen I am Paris."

The young girl raised her clear eyes to his and said gravely, "I reckon your Majesty is *France*!"

She retained this childish fearlessness as the poor student of the Conservatoire, went alone all over Paris with her maiden skirts untarnished by the gilded dust of the boulevards or the filth of byeways; knew all the best shops for her friends, and the cheapest for her own scant purchases; discovered breakfasts for a few sous with pale sempstresses, whose sadness she understood, and reckless chorus girls, whose gaiety she didn't; she knew where the earliest chestnut buds were to be found in the Bois, when the slopes of the Buttes Chaumont were green, and which was the old woman who sold the cheapest flowers before the Madeleine. Alone, and independent, she earned the affection of Madame Bibelot, the concierge, and, what was more, her confidence. Her outgoings and incomings were never questioned. The little American could take care of herself—ah! if her son Jacques were only as reasonable! Miss Maynard might have made more friends had she cared; she might have joined hands with the innocent and light-hearted poverty of the coterie of her own artistic compatriots, but something in her blood made her distrust Bohemianism; her poverty was something to her too sacred for jest or companionship; her own artistic aim was too long and earnest for mere temporary enthusiasms. She might have found friends in her own profession. Her professor opened the sacred doors of his family circle to the young American girl; she appreciated the delicacy, refinement, and cheerful equal responsibilities of that household—so

widely different from the accepted Anglo-Saxon belief—but there were certain restrictions that rightly or wrongly galled her American habits of girlish freedom, and she resolutely tripped past the first *étage* four or five flights higher to her attic, the free sky, and independence! Here she sometimes met another kind of independence in Monsieur Alphonse, aged twenty-two, and her who ought to have been Madame Alphonse, aged seventeen, and they often exchanged greetings on the landing with great respect towards each other, and, oddly enough, no confusion or *distract*. Later they even borrowed each other's matches without fear and without reproach, until one day Monsieur Alphonse's parents took him away, and the desolated *soi-disant* Madame Alphonse, in a cheerful burst of confidence, gave Helen her private opinion of Monsieur, and from her seventeen years' experience warned the American infant of twenty against possible similar complications.

One day—it was near the examination for prizes, and her funds were running low—she was obliged to seek one of those humbler restaurants she knew of for her frugal breakfast. But she was not hungry, and after a few mouthfuls left her meal unfinished as a young man entered and half abstractedly took a seat at her table. She had already moved towards the comptoir to pay her few sous, when, chancing to look up in a mirror which hung above the counter, reflecting the interior of the *café*, she saw the stranger, after casting a hurried glance around him, remove from her plate the broken roll and even the crumbs she had left and as hurriedly sweep them in his pocket-handkerchief. There was nothing very strange in this; she had seen something like it before in these humbler *cafés*—it was a crib for the birds in the Tuileries Gardens, or the poor artist's substitute for rubber in correcting his crayon drawing! But there was a singular flushing of his hand-

some face in the act that stirred her with a strange pity, made her own cheek hot with sympathy, and compelled her to look at him more attentively. The back that was turned towards her was broad-shouldered and symmetrical, and showed a frame that seemed to require stronger nourishment than the simple coffee and roll he had ordered and was devouring slowly. His clothes, well made though worn, fitted him in a smart, soldier-like way and accentuated his decided military bearing. The singular use of his left hand in lifting his cup made her uneasy, until a slight movement revealed the fact that his right sleeve was empty and pinned to his coat. He was one-armed. She turned her compassionate eyes aside, yet lingered to make a few purchases at the counter, as he paid his bill and walked away. But she was surprised to see that he tendered the waiter the unexampled gratuity of a *sou*. Perhaps he was some eccentric Englishman ; he certainly did not look like a Frenchman.

She had quite forgotten the incident, and in the afternoon had strolled with a few fellow-pupils into the galleries of the Louvre. It was "copying day," and as her friends loitered around the easels of the different students with the easy consciousness of being themselves "artists," she strolled on somewhat abstractedly before them. Her own art was too serious to permit her much sympathy with another, and in the chatter of her companions with the young painters a certain levity disturbed her. Suddenly she stopped. She had reached a less frequented room ; there was a single easel at one side, but the stool before it was empty, and its late occupant was standing in a recess by the window, with his back towards her. He had drawn a silk handkerchief from his pocket. She recognised his square shoulders, she recognised the handkerchief, and as he unrolled it she recognised the fragments of her morning's breakfast, as he began to eat them. It was the one-armed man.

She remained so motionless and breathless that he finished his scant meal without noticing her, and even resumed his place before the easel without being aware of her presence. The noise of approaching feet gave a fresh impulse to her own, and she moved towards him. But he was evidently accustomed to these interruptions, and worked on steadily without turning his head. As the other footsteps passed her she was emboldened to take a position behind him and glance at his work. It was an architectural study of one of Canaletto's palaces ; even her inexperienced eyes were struck with its vigour and fidelity. But she was also conscious of a sense of disappointment. Why was he not like the others — copying one of the masterpieces ? Becoming at last aware of a motionless woman behind him he rose, and with a slight gesture of courtesy and a half-hesitating " Vous verrez mieux là, mademoiselle," moved to one side.

" Thank you," said Miss Maynard in English. " But I did not want to disturb you."

He glanced quickly at her face for the first time. " Ah ! you are English," he said.

" No. I am Amercian."

His face lightened. " So am I."

" I thought so," she said.

" From my bad French ?"

" No. Because you did not look up to see if the woman you were polite to was old or young."

He smiled. " And you, mademoiselle—you did not murmur a compliment to the copy over the artist's back."

She smiled too—yet with a little pang over the bread. But she was relieved to see that he evidently had not recognised her. " You are modest," she said ; " you do not attempt masterpieces."

" Oh no ! The giants like Titian and Correggio must

be served with both hands. I have only one," he said, half lightly, half sadly.

"But you have been a soldier," she said, with quick intuition.

"Not much. Only during our war—until I was compelled to handle nothing larger than a palette knife. Then I came home to New York, and as I was no use there I came here to study."

"I am from South Carolina," she said quietly, with a rising colour.

He put his palette down and glanced at her black dress. "Yes," she went on doggedly, "my father lost all his property, and was killed in battle with the Northerners. I am an orphan—a pupil of the Conservatoire." It was never her custom to allude to her family or her lost fortunes; she knew not why she did it now, but something impelled her to rid her mind of it to him at once. Yet she was pained at his grave and pitying face.

"I am very sorry," he said simply. Then, after a pause, he added, with a gentle smile, "At all events you and I will not quarrel here under the wings of the French eagles that shelter us both."

"I only wanted to explain why I was alone in Paris," she said, a little less aggressively.

He replied by unhooking his palette, which was ingeniously fastened by a strap over his shoulder under the missing arm, and opened a portfolio of sketches at his side. "Perhaps they may interest you more than the copy, which I have attempted only to get at this man's method. They are sketches I have done here."

There was a buttress of Notre Dame, a black arch of the Pont Neuf, part of an old courtyard in the Faubourg St. Germain—all very fresh and striking. Yet, with the recollection of his poverty in her mind, she could not

help saying, "But if you copied one of those masterpieces—you know you could sell it. There is always a demand for that work."

"Yes," he replied, "but these help me in my line, which is architectural study. It is, perhaps, not very ambitious," he added thoughtfully, "but," brightening up again, "I sell these sketches too. They are quite marketable, I assure you."

Helen's heart sank again. She remembered now to have seen such sketches—she doubted not they were his—in the cheap shops in the Rue Poissonnière, ticketed at a few francs each. She was silent as he patiently turned them over. Suddenly she uttered a little cry.

He had just uncovered a little sketch of what seemed at first sight only a confused cluster of roof tops, dormer windows, and chimneys, level with the sky-line. But it was bathed in the white sunshine of Paris, against the blue sky she knew so well. There, too, were the gritty crystals and rust of the tiles, the red, brown, and greenish mosses of the gutters, and lower down the more vivid colours of geraniums and pansies in flower-pots under the white dimity curtains which hid the small panes of garret windows, yet every sordid detail touched and transfigured with the poetry and romance of youth and genius.

"You have seen this?" she said.

"Yes. It is a study from my window. One must go high for such effects. You would be surprised if you could see how different the air and sunshine—"

"No," she interrupted gently. "I *have* seen it."

"You?" he repeated, gazing at her curiously.

Helen ran the point of her slim finger along the sketch until it reached a tiny dormer window in the left-hand corner half hidden by an irregular chimney-stack. The curtains were closely drawn. Keeping her finger upon

the spot, she said interrogatively, "And you saw *that* window?"

"Yes, quite plainly. I remember it was always open, and the room seemed empty from early morning to evening, when the curtains were drawn."

"It is my room," she said simply.

Their eyes met with this sudden confession of their equal poverty. "And mine," he said gaily, "from which this view was taken, is in the rear and still higher up on the other street."

They both laughed as if some singular restraint had been removed; Helen even forgot the incident of the bread in her relief. Then they compared notes of their experiences, of their different concierges, of their housekeeping, of the cheap stores and the cheaper restaurants of Paris—except one. She told him her name, and learned that his was Philip, or, if she pleased, Major, Ostrander. Suddenly glancing at her companions who were ostentatiously lingering at a little distance, she became conscious for the first time that she was talking quite confidentially to a very handsome man, and for a brief moment wished, she knew not why, that he had been plainer. This momentary restraint was accented by the entrance of a lady and gentleman, rather *distingué* in dress and bearing, who had stopped before them, and were eyeing equally the artist, his work, and his companion with somewhat insolent curiosity. Helen felt herself stiffening, her companion drew himself up with soldierly rigidity. For a moment it seemed as if, under that banal influence, they would part with ceremonious Continental politeness, but suddenly their hands met in a national handshake, and with a frank smile they separated.

Helen rejoined her companions.

"So you have made a conquest of the recently acquired

but unknown Greek statue?" said Mademoiselle Renée lightly. "You should take up a subscription to restore his arm, *ma petite*, if there is a modern sculptor who can do it. You might suggest it to the two Russian *cognoscenti*, who have been hovering around him as if they wanted to buy him as well as his work. Madame La Princesse is rich enough to indulge her artistic taste."

"It is a countryman of mine," said Helen simply.

"He certainly does not speak French," said Mademoiselle mischievously.

"Nor think it," responded Helen with equal vivacity. Nevertheless she wished she had seen him alone.

She thought nothing more of him that day in her finishing exercises. But the next morning as she went to open her window after dressing she drew back with a new consciousness, and then, making a peephole in the curtain, looked over the opposite roofs. She had seen them many times before, but now they had acquired a new picturesqueness, which, as her view was, of course, the reverse of the poor painter's sketch, must have been a transfigured memory of her own. Then she glanced curiously along the line of windows level with hers. All these, however, with their occasional revelations of the *ménage* behind them, were also familiar to her, but now she began to wonder which was his. A singular instinct at last impelled her to lift her eyes. Higher in the corner house, and so near the roof that it scarcely seemed possible for a grown man to stand upright behind it, was an *Œil de Bœuf* looking down upon the other roofs, and framed in that circular opening like a vignette was the handsome face of Major Ostrander. His eyes seemed to be turned towards her window. Her first impulse was to open it and recognise him with a friendly nod. But an odd mingling of mischief and shyness made her turn away quickly.

Nevertheless she met him the next morning walking slowly so near her house that their encounter might have been scarcely accidental on his part. She walked with him as far as the Conservatoire. In the light of the open street she thought he looked pale and hollow-cheeked; she wondered if it was from his enforced frugality, and was trying to conceive some elaborate plan of obliging him to accept her hospitality at least for a single meal, when he said—

“I think you have brought me luck, Miss Maynard.”

Helen opened her eyes wonderingly.

“The two Russian connoisseurs who stared at us so rudely were pleased, however, to stare also at my work. They offered me a fabulous sum for one or two of my sketches; it didn’t seem to me quite the square thing to old Favel the picture-dealer, whom I had forced to take a lot at one-fifteenth the price, so I simply referred them to him.”

“No!” said Miss Helen indignantly; “you were not so foolish?”

Ostrander laughed.

“I’m afraid what you call my folly didn’t avail, for they wanted what they saw in my portfolio.”

“Of course,” said Helen. “Why, that sketch of the housetop alone was worth a hundred times more than what you——” She stopped; she did not like to reveal what he got for his pictures, and added, “more than what any of those usurers would give.”

“I am glad you think so well of it, for I do not mean to sell it,” he said simply, yet with a significance that kept her silent.

She did not see him again for several days. The preparation for her examination left her no time, and her earnest concentration in her work fully preoccupied her thoughts. She was surprised, but not disturbed, on the day of the

awards to see him among the audience of anxious parents and relations. Miss Helen Maynard did not get the first prize, nor yet the second ; an *accessit* was her only award. She did not know until afterwards that this had long been a foregone conclusion of her teachers on account of some intrinsic defect in her voice. She did not know until long afterwards that the handsome painter's nervousness on that occasion had attracted even the sympathy of some of those who were near him. For she herself had been calm and collected. No one else knew how crushing was the blow which shattered her hopes and made her three years of labour and privation a useless struggle. Yet though no longer a pupil she could still teach ; her master had found her a small patronage that saved her from destitution. That night she circled up quite cheerfully in her usual swallow flight to her nest under the eaves, and even twittered on the landing a little over the condolences of the concierge—who knew, *mon Dieu !* what a beast the director of the Conservatoire was and how he could be bribed ; but when at last her brown head sank on her pillow she cried—just a little.

But what was all this to that next morning—the glorious spring morning which bathed all the roofs of Paris with warmth and hope, rekindling enthusiasm and ambition in the breast of youth, and gilding even much of the sordid dirt below ? It seemed quite natural that she should meet Major Ostrander not many yards away as she sallied out. In that bright spring sunshine and the hopeful spring of their youth they even laughed at the previous day's disappointment. Ah ! what a claque it was after all ! For himself, he, Ostrander, would much rather see that satin-faced Parisian girl who had got the prize smirking at the critics from the boards of the Grand Opera than his country-woman ! The Conservatoire settled things for Paris, but Paris wasn't the world ! America would come to the fore

yet in Art of all kinds—there was a free academy there now—there should be a Conservatoire of its own. Of course, Paris schooling and Paris experience weren't to be despised in Art ; but, thank Heaven ! she had *that*, and no Directors could take it from her ! This and much more, until, comparing notes, they suddenly found that they were both free for that day. Why should they not take advantage of that rare weather and rarer opportunity to make a little suburban excursion ? But where ? There was the Bois, but that was still Paris. Fontainebleau ? Too far ; there were always artists sketching in the forest, and he would like for that day to "sink the shop." Versailles ? Ah, yes ! Versailles !

Thither they went. It was not new to either of them. Ostrander knew it as an artist and as an American reader of that French historic romance—a reader who hurried over the sham intrigues of the *Œil de Bœuf*, the sham pastorals of the *Petit Trianon*, and the sham heroics of a shifty court, to get to Lafayette. Helen knew it as a child who had dodged these lessons from her patriotic father, but had enjoyed the woods, the parks, the terraces, and particularly the restaurant at the park gates. That day they took it like a boy and girl—with the amused, omniscient tolerance of youth for a past so inferior as the present. Ostrander thought this grey-eyed, independent American-French girl far superior to the obsequious *filles d'honneur*, whose brocades had rustled through those *quinconces*, and Helen vaguely realised the truth of her fellow-pupil's mischievous criticism of her companion that day at the Louvre. Surely there was no classical statue here comparable to the one-armed soldier-painter !

All this was as yet free from either sentiment or passion, and was only the frank pride of friendship. But, oddly enough, their mere presence and companionship seemed to excite in others that tenderness they had not yet felt them-

selves. Family groups watched the handsome pair in their innocent confidences, and, with French exuberant recognition of sentiment, thought them the incarnation of Love. Something in their manifest equality of condition kept even the vainest and most susceptible of spectators from attempted rivalry or cynical interruption. And when at last they dropped side by side on a sun-warmed stone bench on the terrace, and Helen, inclining her brown head towards her companion, informed him of the difficulty she had experienced in getting gumbo soup, rice and chicken, corn cakes, or any of her favourite home dishes in Paris, an exhausted but gallant *boulevardier* rose from a contiguous bench and, politely lifting his hat to the handsome couple, turned slowly away from what he believed were tender confidences he would not permit himself to hear.

But the shadow of the trees began to lengthen, casting broad bars across the *allée*, and the sun sank lower to the level of their eyes. They were quite surprised, on looking around a few moments later, to discover that the gardens were quite deserted, and Ostrander, on consulting his watch, found that they had just lost a train which the other pleasure-seekers had evidently availed themselves of. No matter; there was another train an hour later; they could still linger for a few moments in the brief sunset, and then dine at the local restaurant before they left. They both laughed at their forgetfulness, and then, without knowing why, suddenly lapsed into silence. A faint wind blew in their faces and trilled the thin leaves above their heads. Nothing else moved. The long windows of the palace in that sunset light seemed to glisten again with the incendiary fires of the Revolution, and then went out blankly and abruptly. The two companions felt that they possessed the terrace and all its memories as completely as the shadows who had lived and died there.

"I am so glad we have had this day together," said the painter, with a very conscious breaking of the silence, "for I am leaving Paris to-morrow."

Helen raised her eyes quickly to his.

"For a few days only," he continued. "My Russian customers—perhaps I ought to say my *patrons*—have given me a commission to make a study of an old château which the Princess lately bought."

A swift recollection of her fellow-pupil's raillery regarding the Princess's possible attitude towards the painter came over her and gave a strange artificiality to her response.

"I suppose you will enjoy it very much," she said drily.

"No," he returned, with the frankness that she had lacked, "I'd much rather stay in Paris; but," he added with a faint smile, "it's a question of money, and that is not to be despised. Yet I—I—somehow feel that I am deserting you—leaving you here all alone in Paris."

"I've been all alone for five years," she said, with a bitterness she had never felt before, "and I suppose I'm accustomed to it."

Nevertheless she leaned a little forward, with her fawn-coloured lashes dropped over her eyes, which were bent upon the ground and the point of the parasol she was holding with her little gloved hands between her knees. He wondered why she did not look up; he did not know that it was partly because there were tears in her eyes and partly for another reason. As she had leaned forward his arm had quite unconsciously moved along the back of the bench where her shoulders had rested, and she could not have resumed her position except in his half-embrace.

He had not thought of it. He was lost in a greater abstraction. That infinite tenderness—far above a woman's—the tenderness of strength and manliness towards weakness and delicacy, the tenderness that looks down and not

up, was already possessing him. An instinct of protection drew him nearer this bowed but charming figure, and if he then noticed that the shoulders were pretty, and the curves of the slim waist symmetrical, it was rather with a feeling of timidity and a half-consciousness of unchivalrous thought. Yet why should he not try to keep the brave and honest girl near him always? Why should he not claim the right to protect her? Why should they not—they who were alone in a strange land—join their two lonely lives for mutual help and happiness?

A sudden perception of delicacy, the thought that he should have spoken before her failure at the Conservatoire had made her feel her helplessness, brought a slight colour to his cheek. Would it not seem to her that he was taking an unfair advantage of her misfortune? Yet it would be so easy now to slip a loving arm around her waist, while he could work for her and protect her with the other. *The other!* His eye fell on his empty sleeve. Ah! he had forgotten that. He had but *one* arm.

He rose up abruptly—so abruptly that Helen, rising too, almost touched the arm that was hurriedly withdrawn. Yet in that accidental contact, which sent a vague tremor through the young girl's frame, there was still time for him to have spoken. But he only said—

“Perhaps we had better dine.”

She assented quickly—she knew not why—with a feeling of relief. They walked very quietly and slowly towards the restaurant. Not a word of love had been spoken; not even a glance of understanding had passed between them. Yet they both knew by some mysterious instinct that a crisis of their lives had come and gone, and that they never again could be to each other as they were but a brief moment ago. They talked very sensibly and gravely during their frugal meal; the previous spectator of their con-

fidences would have now thought them only simple friends and have been as mistaken as before. They talked freely of their hopes and prospects—all save one! They even spoke pleasantly of repeating their little expedition after his return from the country, while in their secret hearts they had both resolved never to see each other again. Yet by that sign each knew that this was Love, and were proud of each other's pride which kept it a secret.

The train was late, and it was past ten o'clock when they at last appeared before the concierge of Helen's home. During their journey, and while passing through the crowds at the station and in the streets, Ostrander had exhibited a new and grave guardianship over the young girl, and on the first landing, after a scrutinising and an almost fierce glance at one or two of Helen's odd fellow-lodgers, he had extended his protection so far as to accompany her up the four flights to the landing of her apartment. Here he took leave of her, with a grave courtesy that half pained, half pleased her. She watched his broad shoulders and dangling sleeve as he went down the stairs, and then hurriedly turned, entered her room, and locked the door. The smile had faded from her lips. Going to the window, she pressed her hot eyelids against the cool glass and looked out upon the stars nearly level with the black roofs around her. She stood there some moments until another star appeared higher up against the roof-ridge, the star she was looking for. But here the glass pane before her eyes became presently dim with moisture; she was obliged to rub it out with her handkerchief; yet, somehow, it soon became clouded, at which she turned sharply away and went to bed.

But Miss Helen did not know that when she had looked after the retreating figure of her protector as he descended the stairs that night that he was really carrying away on those broad shoulders the character she had so laboriously

gained during her four years' solitude. For when she came down the next morning the concierge bowed to her with an air of easy, cynical abstraction, the result of a long conversation with his wife the night before. He had taken Helen's part with a kindly cynicism. "Ah! what would you—it was bound to come. The affair of the Conservatoire had settled that. The poor child could not starve; penniless, she could not marry. Only why consort with other swallows under the eaves when she could have had a gilded cage on the first *étage*?" But girls were so foolish—in their first affair; then it was always *Love!* The second time they were wiser. And this maimed warrior and painter was as poor as she. A compatriot, too; well, perhaps that saved some scandal; one could never know what the Americans were accustomed to do. The first floor, which had been inclined to be civil to the young teacher, was more so, but less respectful; one or two young men were tentatively familiar, until they looked in her grey eyes and remembered the broad shoulders of the painter. Oddly enough, only Mademoiselle Fifine, of her own landing, exhibited any sympathy with her, and for the first time Helen was frightened. She did not show it, however, only she changed her lodgings the next day. But before she left she had a few moments' conversation with the concierge and an exchange of a word or two with some of her fellow-lodgers. I have already hinted that the young lady had great precision of statement; she had a pretty turn for handling colloquial French, and an incisive knowledge of French character. She left No. 34 Rue de Frivole working itself into a white rage, but utterly undecided as to her real character.

But all this and much more was presently blown away in the hot breath that swept the boulevards at the outburst of the Franco-German War, and Miss Helen Maynard dis-

appeared from Paris with many of her fellow-countrymen. The excitement reached even a quaint old château in Brittany where Major Ostrander was painting. The woman who was standing by his side as he sat before his easel on the broad terrace observed that he looked disturbed.

"What matters?" she said gently. "You have progressed so well in your work that you can finish it elsewhere. I have no great desire to stay in France with a frontier garrisoned by troops while I have a villa in Switzerland where you could still be my guest. Paris can teach you nothing more, my friend; you have only to create now—and be famous."

"I must go to Paris," he said quietly. "I have friends—countrymen—there, who may want me now."

"If you mean the young singer of the Rue de Frivole, you have compromised her already. You can do her no good."

"Madame!"

The pretty face which he had been familiar with for the past six weeks somehow seemed to change its character. Under the mask of dazzling skin he fancied he saw the high cheek-bones and square Tartar angle; the brilliant eyes were even brighter than before, but they showed more of the white than he had ever seen in them.

Nevertheless she smiled, with an equal stony revelation of her white teeth, yet said, still gently, "Forgive me if I thought our friendship justified me in being frank—perhaps too frank for my own good."

She stopped as if half expecting an interruption, but as he remained looking wonderingly at her she bit her lip, and went on: "You have a great career before you! Those who help you must do so without entangling you: a chain of roses may be as impeding as lead. Until you are independent, you—who may in time compass everything your-

self—will need to be helped. You know," she added with a smile, "you have but one arm."

"In your kindness and appreciation you have made me forget it," he stammered. Yet he had a swift vision of the little bench at Versailles where he had *not* forgotten it, and as he glanced around the empty terrace where they stood he was struck with a fateful resemblance to it.

"And I should not remind you now of it," she went on, "except to say that money can always take its place. As in the fairy story, the Prince must have a new arm made of gold." She stopped, and then suddenly coming closer to him said hurriedly, and almost fiercely, "Can you not see that I am advising you against my interests—against myself? Go, then, to Paris, and go quickly, before I change my mind. Only, if you do not find your friends there, remember you have always *one* here." Before he could reply or even understand that white face she was gone.

He left for Paris that afternoon. He went directly to the Rue de Frivole; his old resolution to avoid Helen was blown to the winds in the prospect of losing her utterly. But the concierge only knew that Mademoiselle had left a day or two after Monsieur had accompanied her home. And, pointedly, there was another gentleman who had inquired eagerly—and bountifully as far as money went—for any trace of the young lady. It was a *Russe*. The concierge smiled to himself at Ostrander's flushed cheek. It served this one-armed conceited American *poseur* right. Mademoiselle was wiser in this *second* affair.

Ostrander did not finish his picture. The Princess sent him a cheque which he coldly returned. Nevertheless he had acquired through his Russian patronage a local fame which stood him well with the picture-dealers—in spite of the excitement of the war. But his heart was no longer in his work; a fever of unrest seized him, which at another

time might have wasted itself in mere dissipation. Some of his fellow-artists had already gone into the army. After the first great reverses he offered his one arm and his military experience to that Paris which had given him a home. The old fighting instinct returned to him with a certain desperation he had never known before. In the sorties from Paris the one-armed American became famous, until a few days before the capitulation, when he was struck down by a bullet through the lung and left in a temporary hospital. Here in the whirl and terror of Commune days he was forgotten, and when Paris revived under the Republic he had disappeared as completely as his compatriot Helen.

But Miss Helen Maynard had been only obscured and not extinguished. At the first outbreak of hostilities a few Americans had still kept giddy state among the ruins of the tottering Empire. A day or two after she left the Rue de Frivole she was invited by one of her wealthy former schoolmates to assist with her voice and talent at one of their extravagant entertainments. "You will understand, dear," said Miss de Laine, with ingenious delicacy, as she eyed her old comrade's well-worn dress, "that Poppa expects to pay you professional prices, and it may be an opening for you among our other friends."

"I should not come otherwise, dear," said Miss Helen with equal frankness. But she played and sang very charmingly to the fashionable assembly in the Champs Elysées—so charmingly, indeed, that Miss de Laine patronisingly expatiated upon her worth and her better days in confidence to some of the guests.

"A most deserving creature," said Miss de Laine to the Dowager-Duchess of Soho, who was passing through Paris on her way to England; "you would hardly believe that Poppa knew her father when he was one of the richest men in South Carolina."

"Your father seems to have been very fortunate," said the Duchess quietly, "and so are *you*. Introduce me."

This not being exactly the reply that Miss de Laine expected, she momentarily hesitated; but the Duchess profited by it to walk over to the piano and introduce herself. When she rose to go she invited Helen to luncheon with her the next day. "Come early, my dear, and we'll have a long talk. Helen pointed out hesitatingly that she was practically a guest of the De Laines. "Ah, well, that's true, my dear; then you may bring one of them with you."

Helen went to the luncheon, but was unaccompanied. She had a long talk with the dowager. "I am not rich, my dear, like your friends, and cannot afford to pay you ten napoleons for a song. Like you, I have seen 'better days.' But this is no place for you, child, and if you can bear with an old woman's company for a while I think I can find you something to do." That evening Helen left for England with the Duchess, a piece of "ingratitude, indelicacy, and shameless snobbery" which Miss de Laine was never weary of dilating upon. "And to think *I* introduced her, though she was a professional!"

It was three years after. Paris, reviving under the Republic, had forgotten Helen and the American colony; and the American colony, emigrating to more congenial courts, had forgotten Paris.

It was a bleak day of English summer when Helen, standing by the window of the breakfast-room at Hamley Court, and looking over the wonderful lawn, kept perennially green by humid English skies, heard the practical, masculine voice of the Duchess in her ear at the same moment that she felt the gentle, womanly touch of her hand on her shoulder.

"We are going to luncheon at Moreland Hall to-day, my dear."

"Why, we were there only last week!" said Helen.

"Undoubtedly," returned the Duchess drily, "and we may luncheon there next week and the next following. And," she added, looking into her companion's grey eyes, "it rests with *you* to stay there if you choose."

Helen stared at her protector.

"My dear," continued the Duchess, slipping her arm around Helen's waist, "Sir James has honoured *me*—as became my relations to *you*—with his confidences. As you haven't given me *yours*—I suppose you have none, and that I am telling you news when I say that Sir James wishes to marry you."

The unmistakable astonishment in the girl's eye satisfied the Duchess even before her voice.

"But he scarcely knows me or anything of me!" said the young girl quickly.

"On the contrary, my dear, he knows *everything* about you. I have been particular in telling him all *I* know—and some things even *you* don't know and couldn't tell him. For instance, that you are a very nice person. Come, my dear, don't look so stupefied, or I shall really think there's something in it that I don't know. It's not a laughing nor a crying matter yet—at present it's only luncheon again with a civil man who has three daughters and a place in the county. Don't make the mistake, however, of refusing him before he offers—whatever you do afterwards."

"But——" stammered Helen.

"But—you are going to say that you don't love him and have never thought of him as a husband," interrupted the Duchess; "I read it in your face—and it's a very proper thing to say."

"It is so unexpected," urged Helen.

"Everything is unexpected from a man in these matters," said the Duchess. "We women are the only ones that are prepared."

"But," persisted Helen, "if I don't want to marry at all?"

"I should say, then, that it is a sign that you ought; if you were eager, my dear, I should certainly dissuade you." She paused, and then drawing Helen closer to her said, with a certain masculine tenderness, "As long as I live, dear, you know that you have a home here. But I am an old woman living on the smallest of settlements. Death is as inevitable to me as marriage should be to you."

Nevertheless, they did not renew the conversation, and later received the greetings of their host at Moreland Hall with a simplicity and frankness that were, however, perfectly natural and unaffected in both women. Sir James—a tall, well-preserved man of middle age, with the unmistakable bearing of long years of recognised and unchallenged position—however, exhibited on this occasion that slight consciousness of weakness and susceptibility to ridicule which is apt to indicate the invasion of the tender passion in the heart of the average Briton. His duty as host towards the elder woman of superior rank, however, covered his embarrassment, and for a moment left Helen quite undisturbed to gaze again upon the treasures of the long drawing-room of Moreland Hall with which she was already familiar. There were the half-dozen old masters, whose respectability had been as recognised through centuries as their owner's ancestors; there were the ancestors themselves—wigged, ruffled, and white-handed, by Vandyke, Lely, Romney, and Gainsborough; there were the uniform, expressionless ancestresses in stiff brocade or short-waisted, clinging draperies, but all possessing that brilliant colouring which the grey skies outside lacked, and which seemed to

have departed from the dresses of their descendants. The American girl had sometimes speculated upon what might have been the appearance of the lime-tree walk, dotted with these gaily plumaged folk, and wondered if the tyranny of environment had at last subdued their brilliant colours. And a new feeling touched her. Like most of her country-women, she was strongly affected by the furniture of life ; the thought that all that she saw there *might be hers* ; that she might yet stand in succession to these strange courtiers and stranger shepherdesses, and, like them, look down from the canvas upon the intruding foreigner, thrilled her for a moment with a half proud, half passive sense of yielding to what seemed to be her fate. A narrow-eyed, stiff-haired Dutch maid of honour before whom she was standing gazed at her with staring vacancy. Suddenly she started. Before the portrait upon a fanciful easel stood a small, elaborately framed sketch in oils. It was evidently some recently imported treasure. She had not seen it before. As she moved quickly forward she recognised in a glance that it was Ostrander's sketch from the Paris *grenier*.

The wall, the room, the park beyond, even the grey sky seemed to fade away before her. She was standing once more at her attic window looking across the roofs and chimney-stacks upward to the blue sky of Paris. Through a gap in the roofs she could see the chestnut-trees trilling in the little square ; she could hear the swallows twittering in the leaden troughs of the gutter before her ; the call of a chocolate vendor or the cry of a *gamin* floated up to her from the street below, or the latest song of the *café chantant* was whistled by the blue-bloused workman on the scaffolding hard by. The breath of Paris, of youth, of blended work and play, of ambition, of joyous freedom again filled her and mingled with the scent of the mignonette that used to stand on the old window-ledge.

"I am glad you like it. I have only just put it up."

It was the voice of Sir James—a voice that had regained a little of its naturalness—a calm, even, lazy English voice—confident from the experience of years of respectful listeners. Yet it somehow jarred upon her nerves with its complacency and its utter incongruousness to her feelings. Nevertheless the impulse to know more about the sketch was the stronger.

"Do you mean you have just bought it?" asked Helen.
"It's not English?"

"No," said Sir James, gratified with his companion's interest. "I bought it in Paris just after the Commune."

"From the artist?" continued Helen, in a slightly constrained voice.

"No," said Sir James, "although I knew the poor chap well enough. You can easily see that he was once a painter of great promise. I rather think it was stolen from him while he was in hospital by those incendiary wretches. I recognised it, however, and bought for a few francs from them what I would have paid *him* a thousand for."

"In hospital?" repeated Helen dazedly.

"Yes," said Sir James. "The fact is it was the ending of the usual Bohemian artist's life. Though in this case the man was a real artist—and I believe, by the way, was a countryman of yours."

"In hospital?" again repeated Helen. "Then he was poor?"

"Reckless, I should rather say; he threw himself into the fighting before Paris, and was badly wounded. But it was all the result of the usual love affair—the girl, they say, ran off with the usual richer man. At all events it ruined him for painting; he never did anything worth having afterwards."

"And now?" said Helen in the same unmoved voice.

Sir James shrugged his shoulders. "He disappeared. Probably he'll turn up some day on the London pavement—with chalks. That sketch, by the way, was one that had always attracted me to his studio—though he never would part with it. I rather fancy, don't you know, that the girl had something to do with it. It's a wonderfully realistic sketch, don't you see; and I shouldn't wonder if it was the girl herself who lived behind one of those queer little windows in the roof there."

"She did live there," said Helen in a low voice.

Sir James uttered a vague laugh.

Helen looked around her. The Duchess had quietly and unostentatiously passed into the library, and in full view, though out of hearing, was examining, with her glass to her eye, some books upon the shelves.

"I mean," said Helen, in a perfectly clear voice, "that the young girl did *not* run away from the painter, and that he had neither the right nor the cause to believe her faithless or attribute his misfortunes to her." She hesitated, not from any sense of her indiscretion, but to recover from a momentary doubt if the girl were really her own self—but only for a moment.

"Then you knew the painter, as I did?" he said in astonishment.

"Not as *you* did," responded Helen. She drew nearer the picture, and, pointing a slim finger to the canvas, said—

"Do you see that small window with the mignonette?"

"Perfectly."

"That was *my* room. His was opposite. He told me, so when I first saw the sketch. I am the girl you speak of, for he knew no other, and I believe him to have been a truthful, honourable man."

"But what were you doing there? Surely, you are joking?" said Sir James, with a forced smile.

"I was a poor pupil at the Conservatoire, and lived where I could afford to live."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"And the man was——"

"Major Ostrander was my friend. I even think I have a better right to call him that than you had."

Sir James coughed slightly and grasped the lapel of his coat. "Of course; I daresay; I had no idea of this, don't you know, when I spoke." He looked around him as if to evade a scene. "Ah! suppose we ask the Duchess to look at the sketch—I don't think she's seen it." He began to move in the direction of the library.

"She had better wait," said Helen quietly.

"For what?"

"Until——" hesitated Helen smilingly.

"Until? I am afraid I don't understand," said Sir James stiffly, colouring with a slight suspicion.

"Until you have *apologised*."

"Of course," said Sir James, with a half-hysterical laugh. "I do. You understand I only repeated a story that was told me, and had no idea of connecting *you* with it. I beg your pardon, I'm sure. I er—er—in fact," he added suddenly, the embarrassed smile fading from his face as he looked at her fixedly, "I remember now it must have been the concierge of the house, or the opposite one, who told me. He said it was a Russian who carried off that young girl. Of course it was some made-up story."

"I left Paris with the Duchess," said Helen quietly, "before the war."

"Of course. And she knows all about your friendship with this man."

"I don't think she does. I haven't told her. Why should I?" returned Helen, raising her clear eyes to his.

"Really, I don't know," stammered Sir James. "But here she is. Of course, if you prefer it, I won't say anything of this to her."

Helen gave him her first glance of genuine emotion; it happened, however, to be scorn.

"How odd!" she said, as the Duchess leisurely approached them, her glass still in her eye. "Sir James, quite unconsciously, has just been showing me a sketch of my dear old *mansarde* in Paris. Look! That little window was my room. And, only think of it, Sir James bought it of an old friend of mine, who painted it from the opposite attic, where he lived. And quite unconsciously too."

"How very singular!" said the Duchess; "indeed, quite romantic!"

"Very!" said Sir James.

"Very!" said Helen.

The tone of their voices was so different that the Duchess looked from one to the other.

"But that isn't all," said Helen with a smile. "Sir James actually fancied—"

"Will you excuse me for a moment?" said Sir James, interrupting, and turning hastily to the Duchess, with a forced smile and a somewhat heightened colour. "I had forgotten that I had promised Lady Harriet to drive you over to Deep Hill after luncheon to meet that South American who has taken such a fancy to your place, and I must send to the stables."

As Sir James disappeared the Duchess turned to Helen. "I see what has happened, dear; don't mind me, for I frankly confess I shall now eat my luncheon less guiltily than I feared. But tell me, *how* did you refuse him?"

"I didn't refuse him," said Helen. "I only prevented his asking me."

"How?"

Then Helen told her all—everything except her first meeting with Ostrander at the restaurant. A true woman respects the pride of those she loves more even than her own, and while Helen felt that although that incident might somewhat condone her subsequent romantic passion in the Duchess's eyes, she could not tell it.

The Duchess listened in silence.

"Then you two incompetents have never seen each other since?" she asked.

"No."

"But you hope to?"

"I cannot speak for *him*," said Helen.

"And you have never written to him, and don't know whether he is alive or dead?"

"No."

"Then I have been nursing in my bosom for three years at one and the same time a brave, independent, matter-of-fact young person and the most idiotic, sentimental heroine that ever figured in a romantic opera or a country ballad." Helen did not reply. "Well, my dear," said the Duchess after a pause, "I see that you are condemned to pass your days with me in some cheap hotel on the Continent." Helen looked up, wonderingly. "Yes," she continued. "I suppose I must now make up my mind to sell my place to this gilded South American who has taken a fancy to it. But I am not going to spoil my day by seeing him *now*. No; we will excuse ourselves from going to Deep Hill to-day, and we will go back home quietly after luncheon. It will be a mercy to Sir James."

"But," said Helen earnestly, "I can go back to my old life, and earn my own living."

"Not if I can help it," said the Duchess grimly. "Your independence has made you a charming companion to me, I admit: but I shall see that it does not again spoil your

chances of marrying. Here comes Sir James. Really, my dear, I don't know which one of you looks the more relieved."

On their way back through the park Helen again urged the Duchess to give up the idea of selling Hamley Court, and to consent to her taking up her old freedom and independence once more. "I shall never, never forget your loving kindness and protection," continued the young girl tenderly. "You will let me come to you always when you want me; but you will let me also shape my life anew, and work for my living." The Duchess turned her grave, half-humorous face towards her. "That means you have determined to seek *him*. Well! Perhaps if you give up your other absurd idea of independence, I may assist you. And now I really believe, dear, that there is that dreadful South American," pointing to a figure that was crossing the lawn at Hamley Court, "hovering round like a vulture. Well, I can't see him to-day if he calls, but *you* may. By the way, they say he is not bad-looking, was a famous general in the South American War, and is rolling in money, and comes here on a secret mission from his Government. But I forget—the rest of our life is to be devoted to seeking *another*. And I begin to think I am not a good matchmaker."

Helen was in no mood for an interview with the stranger, whom, like the Duchess, she was inclined to regard as a portent of fate and sacrifice. She knew her friend's straitened circumstances which might make such a sacrifice necessary to insure a competency for her old age, and, as Helen feared, also a provision for herself. She knew the strange tenderness of this masculine woman, which had survived a husband's infidelities and a son's forgetfulness to be given to her, and her heart sank at the prospect of separation, even while her pride demanded that she should

return to her old life again. Then she wondered if the Duchess was right : did she still cherish the hope of meeting Ostrander again ? The tears she had kept back all that day asserted themselves as she flung open the library door and ran across the garden into the myrtle walk. "In hospital !" The words had been ringing in her ears through Sir James's complacent speech, through the oddly constrained luncheon, through the half tender, half masculine reasoning of her companion. He *had* loved her—he had suffered and perhaps thought her false. Suddenly she stopped. At the farther end of the walk the ominous stranger whom she wished to avoid was standing looking towards the house.

How provoking ! She glanced again ; he was leaning against a tree, and was obviously as preoccupied as she was herself. He was actually sketching the ivy-coloured gable of the library. What presumption ! And he was sketching with his left hand. A sudden thrill of superstition came over her. She moved eagerly forward for a better view of him. No ! he had two arms !

But his quick eye had already caught sight of her, and before she could retreat she could see that he had thrown away his sketch-book and was hastening eagerly towards her. Amazed and confounded she would have flown, but her limbs suddenly refused their office, and as he at last came near her with the cry of "Helen !" upon his lips she felt herself staggering, and was caught in his arms.

"Thank God !" he said. "Then she *has* let you come to me !"

She disengaged herself slowly and dazedly from him, and stood looking at him with wondering eyes. He was bronzed and worn ; there was the second arm—but still it was *he*. And with the love, which she now knew he had felt, looking from his honest eyes !

"She has let me come!" she repeated vacantly. "Whom do you mean?"

"The Duchess."

"The Duchess?"

"Yes." He stopped suddenly, gazing at her blank face, while his own grew ashy white. "Helen! For God's sake tell me! You have not accepted him?"

"I have accepted no one," she stammered, with a faint colour rising to her cheeks. "I do not understand you."

A look of relief came over him. "But," he said amazedly, "has not the Duchess told you? how I happen to be here? how when you disappeared from Paris long ago—with my ambition crushed, and nothing left to me but my old trade of the fighter—I joined a secret expedition to help the Chilian Revolutionists? How I, who might have starved as a painter, gained distinction as a partisan general, and was rewarded with an envoyship in Europe? How I came to Paris to seek you? How I found that even the picture—your picture, Helen—had been sold? How in tracing it here I met the Duchess at Deep Hill, and learning you were with her, in a moment of impulse told her my whole story? How she told me that though she was your best friend you had never spoken of me, and how she begged me not to spoil your chance of a good match by revealing myself, and so awakening a past—which she believed you had forgotten? How she implored me at least to let her make a fair test of your affections and your memory, and until then to keep away from you—and to spare you, Helen, and for your sake I consented? Surely, she has told this now!"

"Not a word," said Helen blankly.

"Then you mean to say that if I had not haunted the park to-day, in the hope of seeing you, believing that as you would not recognise me with this artificial arm I should

not break my promise to her—you would not have known I was even living?"

"No!—Yes!—Stay!" A smile broke over her pale face and left it rosy. "I see it all now. O Philip, don't you understand? She wanted only to try us!"

There was a silence in the lonely wood, broken only by the trills of a frightened bird whose retreat was invaded.

"Not now! Please! Wait! Come with me!"

The next moment she had seized Philip's left hand, and dragging him with her, was flying down the walk towards the house. But as they neared the garden door it suddenly opened on the Duchess, with her glasses to her eyes, smiling.

The General Don Felipe Ostrander did not buy Hamley Court, but he and his wife were always welcome guests there. And Sir James, as became an English gentleman—amazed though he was at Philip's singular return, and more singular incognito—afterwards gallantly presented Philip's wife with Philip's first picture.

The Judgment of Bolinas Plain.

THE wind was getting up on the Bolinas Plain. It had started the fine alkaline dust along the level stage-road, so that even that faint track—the only break in the monotony of the landscape—seemed fainter than ever. But the dust-cloud was otherwise a relief: it took the semblance of distant woods where there was no timber, of moving teams where there was no life. And as Sue Beasley, standing in the doorway of One Spring House that afternoon, shading her sandy lashes with her small red hand, glanced along the desolate track, even *her* eyes, trained to the dreary prospect, were once or twice deceived.

“Sue!”

It was a man’s voice from within. Sue took no notice of it, but remained with her hand shading her eyes.

“Sue! Wot yer yawpin’ at thar?”

“Yawpin’” would seem to have been the local expression for her abstraction, since, without turning her head, she answered slowly and languidly: “Reckon’d I see’d som’un on the stage-road. But ‘tain’t nothin’ nor nobody.”

Both voices had in their accents and delivery something of the sadness and infinite protraction of the plain. But the woman’s had a musical possibility in its long-drawn cadence, while the man’s was only monotonous and wearying. And as she turned back into the room again, and confronted her companion, there was the like difference in their appearance. Ira Beasley, her husband, had suffered

from the combined effects of indolence, carelessness, mis-adventure, and disease. Two of his fingers had been cut off by a scythe; his thumb and part of his left ear had been blown away by an overcharged gun; his knees were crippled by rheumatism, and one foot was lame from ingrowing nails—deviations that, however, did not tend to correct the original angularities of his frame. His wife, on the other hand, had a pretty figure, which still retained—they were childless—the rounded freshness of maidenhood. Her features were irregular, yet not without a certain piquancy of outline; her hair had the two shades sometimes seen in imperfect blondes, and her complexion the sallowness of combined exposure and alkaline assimilation.

She had lived there since, an angular girl of fifteen, she had been awkwardly helped by Ira from the tail-board of the emigrant waggon in which her mother had died two weeks before, and which was making its first halt on the Californian plains, before Ira's door. On the second day of their halt Ira had tried to kiss her while she was drawing water, and had received the contents of the bucket instead—the girl knowing her own value. On the third day Ira had some conversation with her father regarding locations and stock. On the fourth day this conversation was continued in the presence of the girl; on the fifth day the three walked to Parson Davies' house, four miles distant, where Ira and Sue were married. The romance of a week had taken place within the confines of her present view from the doorway; the episode of her life might have been shut in in that last sweep of her sandy lashes.

Nevertheless at that moment some instinct, she knew not what, impelled her when her husband left the room to put down the dish she was washing and, with the towel lapped over her bare pretty arms, to lean once more against the doorpost, lazily looking down the plain. A cylindrical

cloud of dust trailing its tattered skirt along the stage-road suddenly assaulted the house, and for an instant enveloped it. As it whirled away again something emerged, or rather dropped from its skirts behind the little cluster of low bushes which encircled the "One Spring." It was a man.

"Thar! I knew it was suthin'," she began aloud, but the words somehow died upon her lips. Then she turned and walked towards the inner door, wherein her husband had disappeared—but here stopped again irresolutely. Then she suddenly walked through the outer door into the road and made directly for the Spring. The figure of a man crouching, covered with dust, half rose from the bushes when she reached them. She was not frightened, for he seemed utterly exhausted, and there was a singular mixture of shame, hesitation, and entreaty in his broken voice as he gasped out—

"Look here!—I say! hide me somewhere, won't you? Just for a little. You see—the fact is—I'm chased! They're hunting me now—they're just behind me. Anywhere will do till they go by! Tell you all about it another time. Quick! Please do!"

In all this there was nothing dramatic nor even startling to her. Nor did there seem to be any present danger impending to the man. He did not look like a horse thief nor a criminal. And he had tried to laugh, half apologetically, half bitterly—the consciousness of a man who had to ask help of a woman at such a moment.

She gave a quick glance towards the house. He followed her eyes, and said hurriedly: "Don't tell on me. Don't let any one see me. I'm trusting you."

"Come," she said suddenly. "Get on *this* side."

He understood her, and slipped to her side, half creeping, half crouching like a dog behind her skirts, but keeping her figure between him and the house as she moved deliberately

towards the barn, scarce fifty yards away. When she reached it she opened the half-door quickly, said: "In there—at the top—among the hay"—closed it, and was turning away, when there came a faint rapping from within. She opened the door again impatiently; the man said hastily: "Wanted to tell you—it was a man who insulted a *woman!* I went for him, you see—and—"

But she shut the door sharply. The fugitive had made a blunder. The importation of her own uncertain sex into the explanation did not help him. She kept on towards the house, however, without the least trace of excitement or agitation in her manner, entered the front door again, walked quietly to the door of the inner room, glanced in, saw that her husband was absorbed in splicing a *riata* and had evidently not missed her, and returned quietly to her dish-washing. With this singular difference. A few moments before she had seemed inattentive and careless of what she was doing, as if from some abstraction; now, when she was actually abstracted, her movements were mechanically perfect and deliberate. She carefully held up a dish and examined it minutely for cracks, rubbing it cautiously with the towel, but seeing all the while only the man she had left in the barn. A few moments elapsed. Then there came another rush of wind around the house, a drifting cloud of dust before the door, the clatter of hoofs, and a quick shout.

Her husband reached the door, from the inner room, almost as quickly as she did. They both saw in the road two armed mounted men—one of whom Ira recognised as the sheriff's deputy.

"Has anybody been here, just now?" he asked sharply.
"No."

"Seen anybody go by?" he continued.

"No. What's up?"

"One of them circus jumpers stabbed Hal Dudley over

the table in Dolores *Monte* shop last night, and got away this morning. We hunted him into the plain, and lost him somewhere in this d—d dust."

"Why, Sue reckoned she saw suthin' just now," said Ira, with a flash of recollection. " Didn't ye, Sue?"

"Why the h—ll didn't she say it before?—I beg your pardon, m'am: didn't see you—you'll excuse haste."

Both the men's hats were in their hands, embarrassed yet gratified smiles on their faces, as Sue came forward. There was the faintest of colour in her sallow cheek, a keen brilliancy in her eyes; she looked singularly pretty. Even Ira felt a slight antenuptial stirring through his monotonously wedded years.

The young woman walked out, folding the towel around her red hands and forearms—leaving the rounded whiteness of bared elbow and upper arm in charming contrast—and looked gravely past the admiring figures that nearly touched her own. "It was somewhar over thar," she said lazily, pointing up the road in the opposite direction to the barn, "but I ain't sure it *was* any one."

"Then he'd already *passed* the house afore you saw him?" said the deputy.

"I reckon—if it *was* him," returned Sue.

"He must have got on," said the deputy; "but then he runs like a deer: it's his trade."

"Wot trade?"

"Acrobat."

"Wot's that?"

The two men were delighted at this divine simplicity. "A man who runs, jumps, climbs—and all that sort, in the circus."

"But isn't he runnin', jumpin', and climbin' away from ye now?" she continued, with adorable *naïveté*.

The deputy smiled, but straightened in the saddle.

"We're bound to come up with him afore he reaches Lowville ; and between that and this house it's a dead level, where a gopher couldn't leave his hole without your spottin' him a mile off! Good-bye!" The words were addressed to Ira, but the parting glance was directed to the pretty wife as the two men galloped away.

An odd uneasiness at this sudden revelation of his wife's prettiness and its evident effect upon his visitors came over Ira. It resulted in his addressing the empty space before his door with, "Well, ye won't ketch much if ye go on yawpin' and dawdin' with women-folks like this ;" and he was unreasonably delighted at the pretty assent of disdain and scorn which sparkled in his wife's eyes as she added, "Not much, I reckon!"

"That's the kind of official trash we have to pay taxes to keep up," said Ira, who somehow felt that if public policy was not amenable to private sentiment there was no value in free government. Mrs. Beasley, however, complacently resumed her dish-washing, and Ira returned to his *riata* in the adjoining room. For quite an interval there was no sound but the occasional click of a dish laid upon its pile, with fingers that, however, were firm and untremulous. Presently Sue's low voice was heard.

"Wonder if that deputy caught anything yet? I've a good mind to meander up the road and see."

But the question brought Ira to the door with a slight return of his former uneasiness. He had no idea of subjecting his wife to another admiring interview. "I reckon I'll go myself," he said dubiously ; "you'd better stay and look after the house."

Her eyes brightened as she carried a pile of plates to the dresser: it was possible she had foreseen this compromise. "Yes," she said cheerfully, "you could go farther than me."

Ira reflected. He could also send them about their business if they thought of returning. He lifted his hat from the floor, took his rifle down carefully from its pegs, and slouched out into the road. Sue watched him until he was well away, then flew to the back door, stopping only an instant to look at her face in a small mirror on the wall—yet without noticing her new prettiness—and then ran to the barn. Casting a backward glance at the diminishing figure of her husband in the distance, she threw open the door and shut it quickly behind her. At first the abrupt change from the dazzling outer plain to the deep shadows of the barn bewildered her. She saw before her a bucket half filled with dirty water, and a quantity of wet straw littering the floor; then lifting her eyes to the hay-loft she detected the figure of the fugitive, unclothed from the waist upward, emerging from the loose hay in which he had evidently been drying himself. Whether it was the excitement of his perilous situation, or whether the perfect symmetry of his bared bust and arms—unlike anything she had ever seen before—clothed him with the cold ideality of a statue, she could not say, but she felt no shock of modesty; while the man, accustomed to the public half-exposure in tights and spangles, was more conscious of detected unreadiness than of shame.

"Gettin' the dust off me," he said, in hurried explanation; "be down in a second." Indeed, in another moment he had resumed his shirt and flannel coat, and swung himself to the floor with a like grace and dexterity, that was to her the revelation of a descending god. She found herself face to face with him—his features cleansed of dirt and grime, his hair plastered in wet curls on his low forehead. It was a face of cheap adornment, not uncommon in his profession—unintelligent, unrefined, and even unheroic; but she did not know that. Overcoming a sudden timidity,

she nevertheless told him briefly and concisely of the arrival and departure of his pursuers.

His low forehead wrinkled. "Thar's no getting away until they come back," he said without looking at her. "Could ye keep me in here to-night?"

"Yes," she returned simply, as if the idea had already occurred to her; "but you must lie low in the loft."

"And could you"—he hesitated, and went on with a forced smile, "You see, I've eaten nothing since last night—could you—"

"I'll bring you something," she said quickly, nodding her head.

"And if you had"—he went on more hesitatingly, glancing down at his travel-torn and frayed garments—"anything like a coat, or any other clothing? It would disguise me also, you see, and put 'em off the track."

She nodded her head again rapidly: she had thought of that too; there was a pair of doeskin trousers and a velvet jacket left by a Mexican *vaquero* who had bought stock from them two years ago. Practical as she was, a sudden conviction that he would look well in the velvet jacket helped her resolve.

"Did they say"—he said, with his forced smile and uneasy glance—"did they—tell you anything about me?"

"Yes," she said abstractedly, gazing at him.

"You see," he began hurriedly, "I'll tell you how it was."

"No, don't!" she said quickly. She meant it. She wanted no facts to stand between her and this single romance of her life. "I must go and get the things," she added, turning away, "before he gets back."

"Who's *he*?" asked the man.

She was about to reply, "My husband," but without knowing why stopped and said, "Mr. Beasley," and then ran off quickly to the house.

She found the *vaquero's* clothes, took some provisions, filled a flask of whisky in the cupboard, and ran back with them, her mouth expanded to a vague smile, and pulsating like a schoolgirl. She even repressed with difficulty the ejaculation "There!" as she handed them to him. He thanked her, but with eyes fixed and fascinated by the provisions. She understood it with a new sense of delicacy, and saying, "I'll come again when he gets back," ran off and returned to the house, leaving him alone to his repast.

Meantime her husband, lounging lazily along the high-road, had precipitated the catastrophe he wished to avoid. For his slouching figure, silhouetted against the horizon on that monotonous level, had been the only one detected by the deputy sheriff and the constable, his companion, and they had charged down within fifty yards of him before they discovered their mistake. They were not slow in making this an excuse for abandoning their quest as far as Lowville: in fact, after quitting the distraction of Mrs. Beasley's presence they had, without in the least suspecting the actual truth, become doubtful if the fugitive had proceeded so far. He might at that moment be snugly ensconced behind some low wire-grass ridge, watching their own clearly defined figures, and waiting only for the night to evade them. The Beasley house seemed a proper place of operation in beating up the field. Ira's cold reception of the suggestion was duly disposed of by the deputy. "I have the *right*, ye know," he said, with a grim pleasantry, "to summon ye as my *posse* to aid and assist me in carrying out the law; but I ain't the man to be rough on my friends, and I reckon it will do jest as well if I 'requisition' your house." The dreadful recollection that the deputy had the power to detail him and the constable to scour the plain while *he* remained behind in company with Sue stopped Ira's further objections. Yet, if he could only get rid of *her*

while the deputy was in the house—but then his nearest neighbour was five miles away! There was nothing left for him to do but to return with the men and watch his wife keenly. Strange to say, there was a certain stimulus in this which stirred his monotonous pulses and was not without a vague pleasure. There is a revelation to some natures in newly awakened jealousy that is a reincarnation of love.

As they came into the house a slight circumstance, which an hour ago would have scarcely touched his sluggish sensibilities, now appeared to corroborate his fear. His wife had changed her cuffs and collar, taken off her rough apron, and evidently redressed her hair. This, with the enhanced brightness of her eyes, which he had before noticed, convinced him that it was due to the visit of the deputy. There was no doubt that the official was equally attracted and fascinated by her prettiness, and although her acceptance of his return was certainly not a cordial one, there was a kind of demure restraint and over-consciousness in her manner that might be coquetry. Ira had vaguely observed this quality in other young women, but had never experienced it in his brief courtship. There had been no rivalry, no sexual diplomacy nor insincerity in his capture of the motherless girl who had leaped from the tailboard of her father's waggon almost into his arms, and no man had since come between them. The idea that Sue should care for any other than himself had been simply inconceivable to his placid, matter-of-fact nature. That their sacrament was final he had never doubted. If his two cows, bought with his own money or reared by him, should suddenly have developed an inclination to give milk to a neighbour, he would not have been more astonished. But *they* could have been brought back with a rope, and without a heart-throb.

Passion of this kind, which in a less sincere society restricts its expression to innuendo or forced politeness, left the rustic Ira only dumb and lethargic. He moved slowly and abstractedly around the room, accenting his slight lameness more than ever, or dropped helplessly into a chair, where he sat, inanely conscious of the contiguity of his wife and the deputy, and stupidly expectant of—he knew not what. The atmosphere of the little house seemed to him charged with some unwholesome electricity. It kindled his wife's eyes, stimulating the deputy and his follower to coarse playfulness, enthralled his own limbs to the convulsive tightening of his fingers around the rungs of his chair. Yet he managed to cling to his idea of keeping his wife occupied, and of preventing any eyeshot between her and her guests, or the indulgence of dangerously flippant conversation, by ordering her to bring some refreshment. "What's gone o' the whisky bottle?" he said, after fumbling in the cupboard.

Mrs. Beasley did not blench. She only gave her head a slight toss. "Ef you men can't get along with the coffee and flap-jacks I'm going to give ye, made with my own hands, ye kin just toddle right along to the first bar, and order your 'tangle foot' there. Ef it's a barkeeper you're looking for, and not a lady, say so!"

The novel audacity of this speech, and the fact that it suggested that preoccupation he hoped for, relieved Ira for a moment, while it enchanted the guests as a stroke of coquettish fascination. Mrs. Beasley triumphantly disappeared in the kitchen, slipped off her cuffs and set to work, and in a few moments emerged with a tray bearing the cakes and steaming coffee. As neither she nor her husband ate anything (possibly owing to an equal pre-occupation), the guests were obliged to confine their attentions to the repast before them. The sun, too, was already

nearing the horizon, and although its nearly level beams acted like a powerful searchlight over the stretching plain, twilight would soon put an end to the quest. Yet they lingered. Ira now foresaw a new difficulty: the cows were to be brought up and fodder taken from the barn; to do this he would be obliged to leave his wife and the deputy together. I do not know if Mrs. Beasley divined his perplexity, but she carelessly offered to perform that evening function herself. Ira's heart leaped and sank again as the deputy gallantly proposed to assist her. But here rustic simplicity seemed to be equal to the occasion. "Ef I propose to do Ira's work," said Mrs. Beasley, with provocative archness, "it's because I reckon he'll do more good helpin' you catch your man than you'll do helpin' *me*! So clear out, both of ye!" A feminine audacity that recalled the deputy to himself, and left him no choice but to accept Ira's aid. I do not know whether Mrs. Beasley felt a pang of conscience as her husband arose gratefully and limped after the deputy; I only know that she stood looking at them from the door, smiling and triumphant.

Then she slipped out of the back door again, and ran swiftly to the barn, fastening on her clean cuffs and collar as she ran. The fugitive was anxiously awaiting her, with a slight touch of brusqueness in his eagerness.

"Thought you were never coming!" he said.

She breathlessly explained, and showed him through the half-opened door the figures of the three men slowly spreading and diverging over the plain, like the nearly level sun-rays they were following. The sunlight fell also on her panting bosom, her electrified sandy hair, her red, half-opened mouth, and short and freckled upper lip. The relieved fugitive turned from the three remoter figures to the one beside him, and saw, for the first time, that it was fair. At which he smiled, and her face flushed and was irradiated.

Then they fell to talk—he grateful, boastful—as the distant figures grew dim; she quickly assenting, but following his expression rather than his words, with her own girlish face and brightening eyes. But what he said, or how he explained his position, with what speciousness he dwelt upon himself, his wrongs, and his manifold manly virtues, is not necessary for us to know, nor was it, indeed, for her to understand. Enough for her that she felt she had found the one man of all the world, and that she was at that moment protecting him against all the world! He was the unexpected, spontaneous gift to her, the companion her childhood had never known, the lover she had never dreamed of, even the child of her unsatisfied maternal yearnings. If she could not comprehend all his selfish incoherencies, she felt it was her own fault; if she could not follow his ignorant assumptions, she knew it was *she* who was deficient; if she could not translate his coarse speech, it was because it was the language of a larger world from which she had been excluded. To this world belonged the beautiful limbs she gazed on—a very different world from that which had produced the rheumatic deformities and useless mayhem of her husband, or the provincially foppish garments of the deputy. Sitting in the hayloft together—where she had mounted for greater security—they forgot themselves in *his* monologue of cheap vapouring, broken only by *her* assenting smiles and her half-checked sighs. The sharp spices of the heated pine-shingles above their heads, and the fragrance of the clover-scented hay, filled the close air around them. The sun was falling with the wind, but they heeded it not. Until the usual fatesful premonition struck the woman, and saying "I must go now," she only half unconsciously precipitated the end. For, as she rose, he caught first her hand and then her waist, and attempted to raise the face that was suddenly

bending down as if seeking to hide itself in the hay. It was a brief struggle, ending in a submission as sudden, and their lips met in a kiss, so eager that it might have been impending for days instead of minutes.

"O Sue! where are ye?"

It was her husband's voice, out of a darkness that they only then realised. The man threw her aside with a roughness that momentarily shocked her above any sense of surprise or shame: *she* would have confronted her husband in his arms—glorified and translated—had he but kept her there. Yet she answered, with a quiet, level voice that astonished her lover, "Here! I'm just coming down!" and walked coolly to the ladder. Looking over, and seeing her husband with the deputy standing in the barnyard, she quickly returned, put her finger to her lips, made a gesture for her companion to conceal himself in the hay again, and was turning away, when, perhaps shamed by her superior calmness, he grasped her hand tightly and whispered, "Come again to-night, dear—do!" She hesitated, raised her hand suddenly to her lips, and then quickly disengaging it slipped down the ladder.

"Ye haven't done much work yet as I kin see," said Ira wearily. "Whitey and Red Tip (the cows) are hangin' over the corral, just waitin'."

"The yellow hen we reckoned was lost is sittin' in the hayloft, and mustn't be disturbed," said Mrs. Beasley, with decision; "and ye'll have to take the hay from the stack to-night. And," with an arch glance at the deputy, "as I don't see that you two have done much either, you're just in time to help fodder down."

Setting the three men to work with the same bright audacity, the task was soon completed—particularly as the deputy found no opportunity for exclusive dalliance with Mrs. Beasley. She shut the barn door herself, and led the

way to the house, learning incidentally that the deputy had abandoned the chase, was to occupy a "shakedown" on the kitchen floor that night with the constable, and depart at daybreak. The gloom of her husband's face had settled into a look of heavy resignation and alternate glances of watchfulness, which only seemed to inspire her with renewed vivacity. But the cooking of supper withdrew her disturbing presence for a time from the room, and gave him some relief. When the meal was ready he sought further surcease from trouble in copious draughts of whisky, which she produced from a new bottle, and even pressed upon the deputy in mischievous contrition for her previous inhospitality.

"Now I know that it wasn't whisky only ye came for, I'll show you that Sue Beasley is no slouch of a barkeeper either," she said.

Then, rolling her sleeves above her pretty arms, she mixed a cocktail in such delightful imitation of the fashionable barkeeper's dexterity that her guests were convulsed with admiration. Even Ira was struck with this revelation of a youthfulness that five years of household care had checked, but never yet subdued. He had forgotten that he had married a child. Only once, when she glanced at the cheap clock on the mantel, had he noticed another change, more remarkable still from its very inconsistency with her burst of youthful spirits. It was another face that he saw—older and matured with an intensity of abstraction that struck a chill to his heart. It was not *his* Sue that was standing there, but another Sue, wrought, as it seemed to his morbid extravagance, by some one else's hand.

Yet there was another interval of relief when his wife, declaring she was tired, and even jocosely confessing to some effect of the liquor she had pretended to taste, went early to bed. The deputy, not finding the gloomy company

of the husband to his taste, presently ensconced himself on the floor, before the kitchen fire, in the blankets that she had provided. The constable followed his example. In a few moments the house was silent and sleeping, save for Ira sitting alone, with his head sunk on his chest and his hands gripping the arms of his chair before the dying embers of his hearth.

He was trying, with the alternate quickness and inaction of an inexperienced intellect and an imagination morbidly awakened, to grasp the situation before him. The common sense that had hitherto governed his life told him that the deputy would go to-morrow, and that there was nothing in his wife's conduct to show that her coquetry and aberration would not pass as easily. But it recurred to him that she had never shown this coquetry or aberration to *him* during their own brief courtship — that she had never looked or acted like this before. If this was love, she had never known it; if it was only "women's ways," as he had heard men say, and so dangerously attractive, why had she not shown it to him? He remembered their matter-of-fact wedding, the bride without timidity, without blushes, without expectation beyond the transference of her home to his. Would it have been different with another man? — with the deputy, who had called this colour and animation to her face? What did it all mean? Were all married people like this? There were the Westons, their neighbours — was Mrs. Weston like Sue? But he remembered that Mrs. Weston had run away with Mr. Weston from her father's house. It was what they called "a love match." Would Sue have run away with him? Would she now run away with — ?

The candle was guttering as he rose with a fierce start — his first impulse of anger — from the table. He took another gulp of whisky. It tasted like water; its fire was quenched

in the greater heat of his blood. He would go to bed. Here a new and undefinable timidity took possession of him: he remembered the strange look in his wife's face. It seemed suddenly as if the influence of the sleeping stranger in the next room had not only isolated her from him, but would make his presence in her bedroom an intrusion on their hidden secrets. He had to pass the open door of the kitchen. The head of the unconscious deputy was close to Ira's heavy boot. He had only to lift his heel to crush that ruddy, good-looking, complacent face. He hurried past him, up the creaking stairs. His wife lay still on one side of the bed apparently asleep, her face half hidden in her loosened, fluffy hair. It was well; for in the vague shyness and restraint that was beginning to take possession of him he felt he could not have spoken to her, or, if he had, it would have been only to voice the horrible unformulated things that seemed to choke him. He crept softly to the opposite side of the bed, and began to undress. As he pulled off his boots and stockings, his eye fell upon his bare, malformed feet. This caused him to look at his maimed hand, to rise, drag himself across the floor to the mirror, and gaze upon his lacerated ear. She, this prettily formed woman lying there, must have seen it often: she must have known all these years that he was not like other men—not like the deputy, with his tight riding-boots, his soft hand, and the diamond that sparkled vulgarly on his fat little finger. A cold sweat broke over him. He drew on his stockings again, lifted the outer counterpane, and, half undressed, crept under it, wrapping its corner around his maimed hand, as if to hide it from the light. Yet he felt that he saw things dimly; there was a moisture on his cheeks and eyelids he could not account for: it must be the whisky "coming out."

His wife lay very still: she scarcely seemed to breathe.

What if she should never breathe again, but die as the old Sue he knew, the lanky girl he had married, unchanged and uncontaminated? It would be better than this. Yet at the same moment the picture was before him of her pretty simulation of the barkeeper, of her white bared arms and laughing eyes, all so new, so fresh to him! He tried to listen to the slow ticking of the clock, the occasional stirring of air through the house, and the movement, like a deep sigh, which was the regular, inarticulate speech of the lonely plain beyond, and quite distinct from the evening breeze. He had heard it often, but, like so many things he had learned that day, he never seemed to have caught its meaning before. Then, perhaps, it was his supine position, perhaps some cumulative effect of the whisky he had taken, but all this presently became confused and whirling. Out of its gyrations he tried to grasp something, to hear voices that called him to "wake," and in the midst of it he fell into a profound sleep.

The clock ticked, the wind sighed, the woman at his side lay motionless for many minutes.

Then the deputy on the kitchen floor rolled over with an appalling snort, struggled, stretched himself, and awoke. A healthy animal, he had shaken off the fumes of liquor with a dry tongue and a thirst for water and fresh air. He raised his knees and rubbed his eyes. The water bucket was missing from the corner. Well, he knew where the spring was, and a turn out of the close and stifling kitchen would do him good. He yawned, put on his boots softly, opened the back door, and stepped out. Everything was dark, but above and around him, to the very level of his feet, all apparently pricked with bright stars. The bulk of the barn rose dimly before him on the right, to the left was the spring. He reached it, drank, dipped his head and hands in it, and arose refreshed. The dry, wholesome breath that

blew over this flat disk around him, rimmed with stars, did the rest. He began to saunter slowly back, the only reminiscence of his evening's potations being the figure he recalled of his pretty hostess, with bare arms and lifted glasses, imitating the barkeeper. A complacent smile straightened his yellow moustache. How she kept glancing at him and watching him, the little witch! Ha! no wonder! What could she find in the surly, slinking, stupid brute yonder? (The gentleman here alluded to was his host.) But the deputy had not been without a certain provincial success with the fair. He was true to most men, and fearless to all. One may not be too hard upon him at this moment of his life.

For as he was passing the house he stopped suddenly. Above the dry, dusty, herbal odours of the plain, above the scent of the new-mown hay within the barn, there was distinctly another fragrance—the smell of a pipe. But where? Was it his host who had risen to take the outer air? Then it suddenly flashed upon him that Beasley did *not* smoke, nor the constable either. The smell seemed to come from the barn. Had he followed out the train of ideas thus awakened, all might have been well; but at this moment his attention was arrested by a far more exciting incident to him—the draped and hooded figure of Mrs. Beasley was just emerging from the house. He halted instantly in the shadow, and held his breath as she glided quickly across the intervening space and disappeared in the half-opened door of the barn. Did she know he was there? A keen thrill passed over him; his mouth broadened into a breathless smile. It was his last! for, as he glided forward to the door, the starry heavens broke into a thousand brilliant fragments around him, the earth gave way beneath his feet, and he fell forward with half his skull shot away.

Where he fell there he lay without an outcry, with only

one movement—the curved and grasping fingers of the fighter's hand towards his guarded hip. Where he fell there he lay dead, his face downwards, his good right arm still curved around across his back. Nothing of him moved but his blood—broadening slowly round him in vivid colour, and then sluggishly thickening and darkening until it stopped too, and sank into the earth a dull brown stain. For an instant the stillness of death followed the echoless report, then there was a quick and feverish rustling within the barn, the hurried opening of a window in the loft, scurrying footsteps, another interval of silence, and then out of the farther darkness the sounds of horse-hoofs in the muffled dust of the road. But not a sound or movement in the sleeping house beyond.

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The stars at last paled slowly, the horizon lines came back—a thin streak of opal fire. A solitary bird twittered in the bush beside the spring. Then the back door of the house opened, and the constable came forth, half awakened and apologetic, and with the bewildered haste of a belated man. His eyes were level, looking for his missing leader as he went on, until at last he stumbled and fell over the now cold and rigid body. He scrambled to his feet again, cast a hurried glance around him—at the half-opened door of the barn, at the floor littered with trampled hay. In one corner lay the ragged blouse and trousers of the fugitive, which the constable instantly recognised. He went back to the house, and reappeared in a few moments with Ira, white, stupefied, and hopelessly bewildered; clear only in his statement that his wife had just fainted at the news of the catastrophe, and was equally helpless in her own room. The constable—a man of narrow ideas, but quick action—saw it all. The mystery was plain without further evidence. The deputy had been awakened by the prowling of the

fugitive around the house in search of a horse. Sallying out, they had met, and Ira's gun, which stood in the kitchen, and which the deputy had seized, had been wrested from him and used with fatal effect at arm's length, and the now double assassin had escaped on the sheriff's horse, which was missing. Turning the body over to the trembling Ira, he saddled his horse and galloped to Lowville for assistance.

These facts were fully established at the hurried inquest which met that day. There was no need to go behind the evidence of the constable, the only companion of the murdered man and first discoverer of the body. The fact that he, on the ground floor, had slept through the struggle and the report made the obliviousness of the couple in the room above a rational sequence. The dazed Ira was set aside, after half-a-dozen contemptuous questions; the chivalry of a Californian jury excused the attendance of a frightened and hysterical woman confined to her room. By noon they had departed with the body, and the long afternoon shadows settled over the lonely plain and silent house. At nightfall Ira appeared at the door, and stood for some moments scanning the plain; he was seen later by two packers, who had glanced furtively at the scene of the late tragedy, sitting outside his doorway, a mere shadow in the darkness; and a mounted patrol later in the night saw a light in the bedroom window where the invalid Mrs. Beasley was confined. But no one saw her afterwards. Later, Ira explained that she had gone to visit a relative until her health was restored. Having few friends and fewer neighbours, she was not missed; and even the constable, the sole surviving guest who had enjoyed her brief eminence of archness and beauty that fatal night, had quite forgotten her in his vengeful quest of the murderer. So that people became accustomed to see this lonely man working in the fields by day, or at nightfall gazing fixedly from his doorway.

At the end of three months he was known as the recluse or "hermit" of Bolinas Plain ; in the rapid history-making of that epoch it was forgotten that he had ever been anything else.

But Justice, which in those days was apt to nod over the affairs of the average citizen, was keenly awake to offences against its own officers ; and it chanced that the constable, one day walking through the streets of Marysville, recognised the murderer and apprehended him. He was removed to Lowville. Here, probably through some modest doubt of the ability of the County Court, which the constable represented, to deal with purely circumstantial evidence, he was not above dropping a hint to the local Vigilance Committee, who, singularly enough, in spite of his resistance, got possession of the prisoner. It was the rainy season, and business was slack ; the citizens of Lowville were thus enabled to give so notorious a case their fullest consideration, and to assist cheerfully at the ultimate hanging of the prisoner, which seemed to be a foregone conclusion.

But herein they were mistaken. For when the constable had given his evidence, already known to the county, there was a disturbance in the fringe of humanity that lined the walls of the Assembly Room where the Committee was sitting, and the Hermit of Bolinas Plain limped painfully into the room. He had evidently walked there : he was soaked with rain and plastered with mud ; he was exhausted and inarticulate. But as he staggered to the witness-bench, and elbowed the constable aside, he arrested the attention of every one. A few laughed, but were promptly silenced by the Court. It was a reflection upon its only virtue—sincerity.

" Do you know the prisoner ? " asked the judge.

Ira Beasley glanced at the pale face of the acrobat, and shook his head.

"Never saw him before," he said faintly.

"Then what are you doing here?" demanded the judge sternly.

Ira collected himself with evident effort, and rose to his halting feet. First he moistened his dry lips, then he said, slowly and distinctly, "Because *I* killed the deputy of Bolinas."

With the thrill which ran through the crowded room, and the relief that seemed to come upon him with that utterance, he gained strength and even a certain dignity.

"I killed him," he went on, turning his head slowly around the circle of eager auditors with the rigidity of a wax figure, "because he made love to my wife. I killed him because he wanted to run away with her. I killed him because I found him waiting for her at the door of the barn at the dead o' night, when she'd got outer bed to jine him. He hadn't no gun. He hadn't no fight. I killed him in his tracks. That man," pointing to the prisoner, "wasn't in it at all." He stopped, loosened his collar, and, baring his rugged throat below his disfigured ear, said: "Now take me out and hang me!"

"What proof have we of this? Where's your wife? Does she corroborate it?"

A slight tremor ran over him.

"She ran away that night, and never came back again. Perhaps," he added slowly, "because she loved him and couldn't bear me; perhaps, as I've sometimes allowed to myself, gentlemen, it was because she didn't want to bear evidence agin me."

In the silence that followed the prisoner was heard speaking to one that was near him. Then he rose. All the audacity and confidence that the husband had lacked were in *his* voice. Nay, there was even a certain chivalry in his manner which, for the moment, the rascal really believed.

"It's true!" he said. "After I stole the horse to get away, I found that woman running wild down the road, cryin' and sobbin'. At first I thought she'd done the shooting. It was a risky thing for me to do, gentlemen; but I took her up on the horse and got her away to Lowville. It was that much dead weight agin my chances, but I took it. She was a woman and—I ain't a dog!"

He was so exalted and sublimated by his fiction that for the first time the jury was impressed in his favour. And when Ira Beasley limped across the room and, extending his maimed hand to the prisoner, said "Shake!" there was another dead silence.

It was broken by the voice of the judge addressing the constable.

"What do you know of the deputy's attentions to Mrs. Beasley? Were they enough to justify the husband's jealousy? Did he make love to her?"

The constable hesitated. He was a narrow man, with a crude sense of the principles rather than the methods of justice. He remembered the deputy's admiration; he now remembered, even more strongly, the object of that admiration, simulating with her pretty arms the gestures of the barkeeper, and the delight it gave them. He was loyal to his dead leader; but he looked up and down, and then said, slowly and half defiantly: "Well, Judge, he was a *man*."

Everybody laughed. That the strongest and most magic of all human passions should always awake levity in any public presentment of or allusion to it is one of the inconsistencies of human nature which even a lynch judge had to admit. He made no attempt to control the tittering of the Court, for he felt that the element of tragedy was no longer there. The foreman of the jury arose and whispered to the judge amid another silence. Then the judge spoke:

"The prisoner and his witness are both discharged.

The prisoner to leave the town within twenty-four hours; the witness to be conducted to his own house at the expense of, and with the thanks of, the Committee."

They say that one afternoon, when a low mist of rain had settled over the sodden Bolinas Plain, a haggard, bedraggled, and worn-out woman stepped down from a common "freighting waggon," before the doorway where Beasley still sat; that, coming forward, he caught her in his arms and called her "Sue"; and they say that they lived happily together ever afterwards. But they say—and this requires some corroboration—that much of that happiness was due to Mrs. Beasley's keeping for ever in her husband's mind her own heroic sacrifice in disappearing as a witness against him, her own forgiveness of his fruitless crime, and the gratitude he owed to the fugitive.

The Strange Experience of Alkali Dick.

HE was a "cowboy." A reckless and dashing rider, yet mindful of his horse's needs: good-humoured by nature, but quick in quarrel; independent of circumstance, yet shy and sensitive of opinion; abstemious by education and general habit, yet intemperate in amusement; self-centred, yet possessed of a childish vanity—taken altogether, a characteristic product of the Western plains, which he should never have left.

But reckless adventure after adventure had brought him into difficulties, from which there was only one equally adventurous escape: he joined a company of Indians engaged by Buffalo Bill to simulate before civilised communities the sports and customs of the uncivilised. In divers Christian arenas of the Nineteenth century he rode as a northern barbarian of the First might have disported before the Roman populace, but harmlessly, of his own free will, and of some little profit to himself. He threw his lasso under the curious eyes of languid men and women of the world, eager for some new sensation, with admiring plaudits from them and a half-contemptuous egotism of his own. But outside of the arena he was lonely, lost, and impatient for excitement.

An ingenious attempt to "paint the town red" did not commend itself as a spectacle to the householders who lived in the vicinity of Earl's Court, London, and Alkali Dick was haled before a respectable magistrate by a serious

policeman, and fined as if he had been only a drunken coster. A later attempt at Paris to "incarnadine" the neighbourhood of the Champ de Mars, and "round up" a number of *boulevardiers*, met with a more disastrous result —the gleam of steel from mounted gendarmes, and a mandate to his employers.

So it came that one night, after the conclusion of the performance, Alkali Dick rode out of the corral gate of the Hippodrome with his last week's salary in his pocket and an imprecation on his lips. He had shaken the sawdust of the sham arena from his high, tight-fitting boots ; he would shake off the white dust of France, and the effeminate soil of all Europe also, and embark at once for his own country and the Far West !

A more practical and experienced man would have sold his horse at the nearest market and taken train to Havre, but Alkali Dick felt himself incomplete on *terra firma* without his mustang—it would be hard enough to part from it on embarking—and he had determined to ride to the seaport.

The spectacle of a lithe horseman, clad in a Rembrandt sombrero, velvet jacket, turnover collar, almost Van Dyke in its proportions, white trousers and high boots, with long curling hair falling over his shoulders, and a pointed beard and moustache, was a picturesque one, but still, not a novelty to the late-supping Parisians who looked up under the midnight gas as he passed, and only recognised one of those men whom Paris had agreed to designate as "Booflobils" going home.

At three o'clock he pulled up at a wayside cabaret, preferring it to the publicity of a larger hotel, and lay there till morning. The slight consternation of the cabaret-keeper and his wife over this long-haired phantom, with glittering deep-set eyes, was soothed by a royally flung gold coin, and

a few words of French slang picked up in the arena, which, with the name of Havre, comprised Dick's whole knowledge of the language. But he was touched with their ready and intelligent comprehension of his needs, and their genial if not so comprehensive loquacity. Luckily for his quick temper, he did not know that they had taken him for a travelling quack-doctor going to the Fair of Yvetot, and that madame had been on the point of asking him for a magic balsam to prevent migraine.

He was up betimes and away, giving a wide berth to the larger towns ; taking byways and cut-offs, yet always with the Western pathfinder's instinct, even among these alien, poplar-haunted plains, low-banked willow-fringed rivers, and cloverless meadows. The white sun shining everywhere—on dazzling arbours, summer-houses, and trellises ; on light-green vines and delicate pea-rows ; on the white trousers, jackets, and shoes of smart shopkeepers or holiday-makers ; on the white headdresses of nurses and the white-winged caps of the Sisters of St. Vincent—all this grew monotonous to this native of still more monotonous wastes. The long black shadows of short, blue-skirted, sabotted women and short blue-bloused, sabotted men slowly working in the fields, with slow oxen, or still slower heavy Norman horses ; the same horses gaily bedecked, dragging slowly not only heavy waggons but their own apparently more monstrous weight over the white road, fretted his nervous Western energy, and made him impatient to get on.

At the close of the second day he found some relief on entering a trackless wood—not the usual formal avenue of equidistant trees, leading to nowhere, and stopping upon the open field—but apparently a genuine forest as wild as one of his own “oak-bottoms.” Gnarled roots and twisted branches flung themselves across his path ; his mustang's hoofs sank in deep pits of moss and last year's withered

leaves ; trailing vines caught his heavy-stirruped feet, or brushed his broad *sombrero* ; the vista before him seemed only to endlessly repeat the same sylvan glade ; he was in fancy once more in the primeval Western forest, and encompassed by its vast, dim silences. He did not know that he had in fact only penetrated an ancient park, which, in former days, resounded to the winding fanfare of the chase, and was still, on stated occasions, swept over by accurately green-coated Parisians and green-plumed *Dianes*, who had come down by train ! To him it meant only unfettered and unlimited freedom.

He rose in his stirrups, and sent a characteristic yell ringing down the dim aisles before him. But, alas ! at the same moment, his mustang, accustomed to the firmer grip of the prairie, in lashing out, stepped upon a slimy root, and fell heavily, rolling over his clinging and still undislodged rider. For a few moments both lay still. Then Dick extricated himself with an oath, rose giddily, dragged up his horse—who, after the fashion of his race, was meekly succumbing to his reclining position—and then became aware that the unfortunate beast was badly sprained in the shoulder, and temporarily lame. The sudden recollection that he was some miles from the road, and that the sun was sinking, concentrated his scattered faculties. The prospect of sleeping out in that summer woodland was nothing to the pioneer-bred Dick ; he could make his horse and himself comfortable anywhere—but he was delaying his arrival at Havre. He must regain the high-road—or some wayside inn. He glanced around him ; the westering sun was a guide for his general direction, the road must follow it north or south ; he would find a "clearing" somewhere. But here Dick was mistaken ; there seemed no interruption of, no encroachment upon this sylvan tract, as in his Western woods. There was no track or trail to be found ;

he missed even the ordinary woodland signs that denoted the path of animals to water. For the park, from the time a Northern Duke had first alienated it from the virgin forest, had been rigidly preserved.

Suddenly, rising apparently from the ground before him, he saw the high roof-ridges and *tourelles* of a long, irregular, gloomy building. A few steps farther showed him that it lay in a cup-like depression of the forest, and that it was still a long descent from where he had wandered to where it stood in the gathering darkness. His mustang was moving with great difficulty ; he uncoiled his *lariat* from the saddle-horn, and, selecting the most open space, tied one end to the trunk of a large tree—the forty feet of horse-hair rope giving the animal a sufficient degree of grazing freedom.

Then he strode more quickly down the forest side towards the building, which now revealed its austere proportions, though Dick could see that they were mitigated by a strange, formal flower-garden, with quaint statues and fountains. There were grim black *allées* of clipped trees, a curiously wrought iron gate, and twisted iron espaliers. On one side the edifice was supported by a great stone terrace, which seemed to him as broad as a Parisian *boulevard*. Yet everywhere it appeared sleeping in the desertion and silence of the summer twilight. The evening breeze swayed the lace curtains at the tall windows, but nothing else moved. To the unsophisticated Western man it looked like a scene on the stage.

His progress was, however, presently checked by the first sight of preservation he had met in the forest—a thick hedge, which interfered between him and a sloping lawn beyond. It was up to his waist, yet he began to break his way through it, when suddenly he was arrested by the sound of voices. Before him on the lawn, a man and woman,

evidently servants, were slowly advancing, peering into the shadows of the wood which he had just left. He could not understand what they were saying, but he was about to speak and indicate his desire to find the road by signs, when the woman, turning towards her companion, caught sight of his face and shoulders above the hedge. To his surprise and consternation, he saw the colour drop out of her fresh cheeks, her round eyes fix in their sockets, and with a despairing shriek she turned and fled towards the house. The man turned at his companion's cry, gave the same horrified glance at Dick's face, uttered a hoarse "*Sacré!*" crossed himself violently, and fled also!

Amazed, indignant, and for the first time in his life humiliated, Dick gazed speechlessly after them. The man, of course, was a sneaking coward—but the woman was rather pretty. It had not been Dick's experience to have women run *from* him! Should he follow them, knock the silly fellow's head against a tree, and demand an explanation? Alas! he knew not the language! They had already reached the house and disappeared in one of the offices. Well! Let them go—for a mean, "low down" pair of country bumpkins!—he wanted no favours from them!

He turned back angrily into the forest to seek his unlucky beast. The gurgle of water fell on his ear; hard by was a spring, where at least he could water the mustang. He stooped to examine it; there was yet light enough in the sunset sky to throw back from that little mirror the reflection of his thin, oval face, his long, curling hair, and his pointed beard and moustache. Yes! this was his face—the face that many women in Paris had agreed was romantic and picturesque. Had those wretched green-horns never seen a real man before? Were they idiots, or insane? A sudden recollection of the silence and seclusion

of the building suggested certainly an asylum—but where were the keepers?

It was getting darker in the wood ; he made haste to recover his horse, to drag it to the spring, and there bathe its shoulder in the water, mixed with whisky taken from his flask. His saddle-bag contained enough bread and meat for his own supper ; he would camp out for the night where he was, and with the first light of dawn make his way back through the wood whence he came. As the light slowly faded from the wood he rolled himself in his saddle-blanket and lay down.

But not to sleep ! His strange position, the accident to his horse, an unusual irritation over the incident of the frightened servants—trivial as it might have been to any other man—and, above all, an increasing childish curiosity kept him awake and restless. Presently he could see also that it was growing lighter beyond the edge of the wood, and that the rays of a young crescent moon, while it plunged the forest into darkness and impassable shadow, evidently was illuminating the hollow below. He threw aside his blanket, and made his way to the hedge again. He was right ; he could see the quaint, formal lines of the old garden more distinctly—the broad terrace—the queer, dark bulk of the house, with lights now gleaming from a few of its open windows.

Before one of these windows opening on the terrace was a small white draped table with fruits, cups and glasses, and two or three chairs. As he gazed curiously at these new signs of life and occupation, he became aware of a regular and monotonous tap upon the stone flags of the terrace. Suddenly he saw three figures slowly turn the corner of the terrace at the farther end of the building, and walk towards the table. The central figure was that of an elderly woman, yet tall and stately of carriage, walking with a stick, whose

regular tap he had heard, supported on the one side by an elderly *curé* in black *soutaine*, and on the other by a tall and slender girl in white.

They walked leisurely to the other end of the terrace, as it performing a regular exercise, and returned, stopping before the open French window; where, after remaining in conversation a few moments, the elderly lady and her ecclesiastical companion entered. The young girl sauntered slowly to the steps of the terrace, and, leaning against a huge vase as she looked over the garden, seemed lost in contemplation. Her face was turned towards the wood, but in quite another direction from where he stood.

There was something so gentle, refined, and graceful in her figure, yet dominated by a girlish youthfulness of movement and gesture, that Alkali Dick was singularly interested. He had probably never seen an *ingénue* before; he had certainly never come in contact with a girl of that caste and seclusion in his brief Parisian experience. He was sorely tempted to leave his hedge and try to obtain a nearer view of her. There was a fringe of lilac bushes running from the garden up the slope; if he could gain their shadows, he could descend into the garden. What he should do after his arrival he had not thought; but he had one idea—he knew not why—that if he ventured to speak to her he would not be met with the abrupt rustic terror he had experienced at the hands of the servants. *She* was not of that kind! He crept through the hedge, reached the lilacs, and began the descent softly and securely in the shadow. But at the same moment she arose, called in a youthful voice towards the open window, and began to descend the steps. A half-expostulating reply came from the window, but the young girl answered it with the laughing, capricious confidence of a spoiled child, and continued her way into the garden. Here she paused a moment and hung over a

rose-tree, from which she gathered a flower, afterwards thrust into her belt. Dick paused too, half crouching, half leaning over a lichen-stained, cracked stone pedestal from which the statue had long been overthrown and forgotten.

To his surprise, however, the young girl, following the path to the lilacs, began leisurely to ascend the hill, swaying from side to side with a youthful movement, and swinging the long stalk of a lily at her side. In another moment he would be discovered ! Dick was frightened ; his confidence of the moment before had all gone : he would fly—and yet, an exquisite and fearful joy kept him motionless. She was approaching him, full and clear in the moonlight. He could see the grace of her delicate figure in the simple white frock drawn at the waist with broad satin ribbon, and its love-knots of pale-blue ribbons on her shoulders ; he could see the coils of her brown hair, the pale, olive tint of her oval cheek, the delicate, swelling nostril of her straight, clear-cut nose ; he could even smell the lily she carried in her little hand. Then, suddenly, she listed her long lashes, and her large grey eyes met his.

Alas ! the same look of vacant horror came into her eyes, and fixed and dilated their clear pupils. But she uttered no outcry—there was something in her blood that checked it—something that even gave a dignity to her recoiling figure, and made Dick flush with admiration. She put her hand to her side, as if the shock of the exertion of her ascent had set her heart to beating, but she did not faint. Then her fixed look gave way to one of infinite sadness, pity, and pathetic appeal. Her lips were parted—they seemed to be moving, apparently in prayer. At last her voice came, wonderingly, timidly, tenderly : “*Mon Dieu ! c'est donc vous ? Ici ? C'est vous que Marie a cru voir ! Que venez-vous faire ici, Armand de Fontonelles ? Répondez !*”

Alas, not a word was comprehensible to Dick ; nor could

he think of a word to say in reply. He made an uncouth, half-irritated, half-despairing gesture towards the wood he had quitted, as if to indicate his helpless horse, but he knew it was meaningless to the frightened yet exalted girl before him. Her little hand crept to her breast and clutched a rosary within the folds of her dress, as her soft voice again arose, low but appealingly—

“ Vous souffrez ! Ah, mon Dieu ! Peut-on vous secourir ? Moi-même—mes prières pourraient elles intercéder pour vous ? Je supplierai le ciel de prendre en pitié l’âme de mon ancêtre. Monsieur le curé est là—je lui parlerai. Lui et ma mère vous viendront en aide.”

She clasped her hands appealingly before him.

Dick stood bewildered, hopeless, mystified ; he had not understood a word ; he could not say a word. For an instant he had a wild idea of seizing her hand and leading her to his helpless horse, and then came what he believed was his salvation—a sudden flash of recollection that he had seen the word he wanted, the one word that would explain all, in a placarded notice at the Cirque of a bracelet that had been *lost*—yes, the single word “*perdu*.” He made a step towards her, and, in a voice almost as faint as her own, stammered : “*Perdu !*”

With a little cry, that was more like a sigh than an outcry, the girl’s arms fell to her side ; she took a step backwards, reeled, and fainted away.

Dick caught her as she fell. What had he said !—but, more than all, what should he do now ? He could not leave her alone and helpless—yet how could he justify another disconcerting intrusion ? He touched her hands, they were cold and lifeless—her eyes were half-closed, her face as pale and drooping as her lily. Well, he must brave the worst now—and carry her to the house, even at the risk of meeting the others and terrifying them as he had her.

He caught her up—he scarcely felt her weight against his breast and shoulder, and ran hurriedly down the slope to the terrace, which was still deserted. If he had time to place her on some bench beside the window, within their reach, he might still fly undiscovered! But as he panted up the steps of the terrace with his burden, he saw that the French window was still open, but the light seemed to have been extinguished. It would be safer for her if he could place her *inside* the house—if he but dared to enter. He was desperate—and he dared!

He found himself alone, in a long *salon* of rich but faded white and gold hangings, lit at the farther end by two tall candles on either side of the high marble mantel, whose rays, however, scarcely reached the window where he had entered. He laid his burden on a high-backed sofa. In so doing the rose fell from her belt. He picked it up, put it in his breast, and turned to go. But he was arrested by a voice from the terrace—

“Renée!”

It was the voice of the elderly lady, who, with the *curé* at her side, had just appeared from the rear of the house, and from the farther end of the terrace was looking towards the garden in search of the young girl. His escape in that way was cut off. To add to his dismay, the young girl, perhaps roused by her mother’s voice, was beginning to show signs of recovering consciousness. Dick looked quickly around him. There was an open door, opposite the window, leading to a hall which, no doubt, offered some exit on the other side of the house. It was his only remaining chance! He darted through it, closed it behind him, and found himself at the end of a long hall or picture-gallery, strangely illuminated through high windows, reaching nearly to the roof, by the moon, which on that side of the building threw nearly level bars of light and

shadows across the floor and the quaint portraits on the wall.

But to his delight he could see at the other end a narrow, lance-shaped open postern door showing the moonlit pavement without—evidently the door through which the mother and the *curé* had just passed out. He ran rapidly towards it. As he did so he heard the hurried ringing of bells and voices in the room he had quitted—the young girl had evidently been discovered—and this would give him time. He had nearly reached the door, when he stopped suddenly—his blood chilled with awe! It was his turn to be terrified—he was standing, apparently, before *himself!*

His first recovering thought was that it was a mirror—so accurately was every line and detail of his face and figure reflected. But a second scrutiny showed some discrepancies of costume, and he saw it was a panelled portrait on the wall. It was of a man of his own age, height, beard, complexion, and features, with long curls like his own, falling over a lace Van Dyke collar, which, however, again simulated the appearance of his own hunting-shirt. The broad-brimmed hat in the picture, whose drooping plume was lost in shadow, was scarcely different from Dick's *sombrero*. But the likeness of the face to Dick was marvellous—convincing! As he gazed at it, the wicked, black eyes seemed to flash and kindle at his own—its lips curled with Dick's own sardonic humour!

He was recalled to himself by a step in the gallery. It was the *curé*, who had entered hastily, evidently in search of one of the servants. Partly because it was a man and not a woman, partly from a feeling of bravado—and partly from a strange sense, excited by the picture, that he had some claim to be there, he turned and faced the pale priest with a slight dash of impatient devilry that would have

done credit to the portrait. But he was sorry for it the next moment!

The priest, looking up suddenly, discovered what seemed to him to be the portrait standing before its own frame and glaring at him. Throwing up his hands with an averted head and an "*Exorcis —!*" he wheeled and scurried away. Dick seized the opportunity, darted through the narrow door on to the rear terrace, and ran, under cover of the shadow of the house, to the steps into the garden. Luckily for him, this new and unexpected diversion occupied the inmates too much with what was going on in the house to give them time to search outside. Dick reached the lilac hedge, tore up the hill, and in a few moments threw himself, panting, on his blanket. In the single look he had cast behind he had seen that the half-dark *salon* was now brilliantly lit—where no doubt the whole terrified household was now assembled. He had no fear of being followed; since his confrontation with his own likeness in the mysterious portrait, he understood everything. The apparently supernatural character of his visitation was made plain; his ruffled vanity was soothed—his vindication was complete. He laughed to himself and rolled about, until in his suppressed merriment the rose fell from his bosom, and he stopped! Its freshness and fragrance recalled the innocent young girl he had frightened. He remembered her gentle, pleading voice, and his cheek flushed. Well, he had done the best he could in bringing her back to the house—at the risk of being taken for a burglar—and she was safe now! If that stupid French parson didn't know the difference between a living man and a dead and painted one—it wasn't his fault. But he fell asleep with the rose in his fingers.

He was awake at the first streak of dawn. He again bathed his horse's shoulder, saddled, but did not mount

him, as the beast, although better, was still stiff, and Dick wished to spare him for the journey to still distant Havre, although he had determined to lie over that night at the first wayside inn. Luckily for him, the disturbance at the Château had not extended to the forest, for Dick had to lead his horse slowly, and could not have escaped, but no suspicion of external intrusion seemed to have been awakened, and the woodland was, evidently, seldom invaded.

By dint of laying his course by the sun and the exercise of a little woodcraft, in the course of two hours he heard the creaking of a hay-cart, and knew that he was near a travelled road. But to his discomfiture he presently came to a high wall, which had evidently guarded this portion of the woods from the public. Time, however, had made frequent breaches in the stones; these had been roughly filled with a rude abatis of logs and tree tops pointing towards the road. But as these were mainly designed to prevent intrusion into the park rather than egress from it, Dick had no difficulty in rolling them aside and emerging at last with his limping steed upon the white high-road. The creaking cart had passed; it was yet early for traffic, and Dick presently came upon a wine-shop, a bakery, a blacksmith's shop, laundry, and a somewhat pretentious *café* and hotel in a broader space which marked the junction of another road.

Directly before it, however, to his consternation, were the massive but time-worn iron gates of a park, which Dick did not doubt was the one in which he had spent the previous night. But it was impossible to go farther in his present plight, and he boldly approached the restaurant. As he was preparing to make his usual explanatory signs, to his great delight he was addressed in a quaint, broken English, mixed with forgotten American slang, by the white-

trousered, black alpaca-coated proprietor. More than that—he was a Social Democrat and an enthusiastic lover of America—had he not been to “Bos-town” and New York, and penetrated as far West as “Booflo”?—and had much pleasure in that beautiful and free country! Yes! it was a “go-a-ed” country—you “bet-your-lif.” One had reason to say so—there was your electricity—your street cars—your “steambots”—ah! such steambots—and your “r-rail-r-roads.” Ah! observe! compare your r-rail-r-roads and the buffet of the Pullman with the line from Paris, for example—and where is one? Nowhere! Actually, positively, without doubt, nowhere!

Later, at an appetising breakfast—at which, to Dick’s great satisfaction, the good man had permitted and congratulated himself to sit at table with a free-born American—he was even more loquacious. For what then, he would ask, was this incompetence—this imbecility—of France? He would tell. It was the vile corruption of Paris, the grasping of capital and companies, the fatal influence of the still clinging *noblesse*, and the insidious Jesuitical power of the priests. As, for example, Monsieur “the Booflo-bil” had doubtless noticed the great gates of the park before the *café*? It was the preserve—the hunting-park of one of the old grand seigneurs, still kept up by his descendants, the Comtes de Fontonelles—hundreds of acres that had never been tilled, and kept as wild waste wilderness—kept for a day’s pleasure in a year! And, look you! the peasants starving around its walls in their small garden patches and pinched farms! And the present Comte de Fontonelles cascading gold on his mistresses in Paris; and the Comtesse, his mother, and her daughter living there to feed and fatten and pension a brood of plotting, black-cowled priests. Ah, bah! where was your Republican France, then? But a time would come. The “Booflo-bil” had, without doubt,

noticed, as he came along the road, the breaches in the wall of the park?

Dick, with a slight dry reserve, "reckoned that he had."

"They were made by the scythes and pitchforks of the peasants in the Revolution of '93, when the count was *émigré*, as one says with reason 'skedadelle,' to England. Let them look the next time that they burn not the Château —'bet you lif'!"

"The Château," said Dick, with affected carelessness. "Wot's the blamed thing like?"

It was an old affair—with armour and a picture-gallery—and *bric-à-brac*. He had never seen it. Not even as a boy—it was kept very secluded then. As a man—you understand—he could not ask the favour. The Comtes de Fontonelles and himself were not friends. The family did not like a *café* near their sacred gates—where had stood only the huts of their retainers. The American would observe that he had not called it "*Café de Château*," nor "*Café de Fontonelles*"—the gold of California would not induce him. Why did he remain there? Naturally, to goad them! It was a principle, one understood. To goad them and hold them in check! One kept a *café*—why not? One had one's principles—one's conviction—that was another thing! That was the kind of "'air-pin"—was it not?—that *he*, Gustav Ribaud, was like!

Yet for all his truculent Socialism he was quick, obliging, and charmingly attentive to Dick and his needs. As to Dick's horse, he should have the best veterinary surgeon—there was an incomparable one in the person of the blacksmith—see to him, and if it were an affair of days, and Dick must go, he himself would be glad to purchase the beast, his saddle, and accoutrements. It was an affair of business—an advertisement for the *café*! He would ride the horse himself before the gates of the park. It would

please his customers. Ha! He had learned a trick or two in free America.

Dick's first act had been to shave off his characteristic beard and moustache, and even to submit his long curls to the village barber's shears, while a straw hat, which he bought to take the place of his slouched *sombrero*, completed his transformation. His host saw in the change only the natural preparation of a voyager, but Dick had really made the sacrifice, not from fear of detection, for he had recovered his old swaggering audacity, but from a quick distaste he had taken to his resemblance to the portrait. He was too genuine a Westerner, and too vain a man, to feel flattered at his resemblance to an aristocratic bully, as he believed the ancestral De Fontonelles to be. Even his momentary sensation as he faced the *curé* in the picture-gallery was more from a vague sense that liberties had been taken with his, Dick's, personality than that he had borrowed anything from the portrait.

But he was not so clear about the young girl. Her tender, appealing voice, although he knew it had been addressed only to a vision, still thrilled his fancy. The pluck that had made her withstand her fear so long, until he had uttered that dreadful word, still excited his admiration. His curiosity to know what mistake he had made—for he knew it must have been some frightful blunder—was all the more keen, as he had no chance to rectify it. What a brute she must have thought him—or *did* she really think him a brute even then?—for her look was one more of despair than pity! Yet she would remember him only by that last word—and never know that he had risked insult and ejection from her friends to carry her to her place of safety. He could not bear to go across the seas carrying the pale, unsatisfied face of that gentle girl ever before his eyes! A sense of delicacy—new to Dick, but always the accompani-

ment of deep feeling—kept him from even hinting his story to his host; though he knew—perhaps *because* he knew—that it would gratify his enmity to the family. A sudden thought struck Dick. He knew her house—and her name. He would write her a note. Somebody would be sure to translate it for her.

He borrowed pen, ink, and paper, and in the clean solitude of his fresh chintz bedroom indited the following letter:—

“DEAR MISS FONTONELLES,—Please excuse me for having skeert you. I hadn’t any call to do it; I never reckoned to do it—it was all jest my derned luck: I only reckoned to tell you I was lost—in them blamed woods—don’t you remember?—‘lost’—*perdoo!*—and then you up and fainted! I wouldn’t have come into your garden, only, you see, I’d just skeered by accident two of your helps, reg’lar softies, and I wanted to explain. I reckon they allowed I was that man that that picture in the hall was painted after. I reckon they took *me* for him—see? But he ain’t *my* style, nohow, and I never saw the picture at all until after I’d toted you, when you fainted, up to your house, or I’d have made my kalkilations and acted according. I’d have laid low in the woods, and got away without skeerin’ you. You see what I mean? It was mighty mean of me, I suppose, to have tetched you at all, without saying ‘Excuse me, miss,’ and toted you out of the garden and up the steps into your own parlour without asking your leave. But the whole thing tumbled so suddent. And it didn’t seem the square thing for me to lite out and leave you lying there on the grass. That’s why! I’m sorry I skeert that old preacher, but he came upon me in the picture-hall so suddent, that it was a mighty close call, I tell you, to get off without a shindy.

Please forgive me, Miss Fontonelles. When you get this, I shall be going back home to America, but you might write to me at Denver City, saying you're all right. I liked your style; I liked your grit in standing up to me in the garden until you had your say, when you thought I was the Lord knows what—though I never understood a word you got off—not knowing French. But it's all the same now. Say! I've got your rose!—Yours very respectfully,

“RICHARD FOUNTAINS.”

Dick folded the epistle and put it in his pocket. He would post it himself on the morning before he left. When he came downstairs he found his indefatigable host awaiting him, with the report of the veterinary blacksmith. There was nothing seriously wrong with the mustang, but it would be unfit to travel for several days. The landlord repeated his former offer. Dick, whose money was pretty well exhausted, was fain to accept, reflecting that *she* had never seen the mustang and would not recognise it. But he drew the line at the *sombrero*, to which his host had taken a great fancy. He had worn it before *her*!

Later in the evening Dick was sitting on the low verandah of the *café*, overlooking the white road. A round white table was beside him, his feet were on the railing, but his eyes were resting beyond on the high mouldy iron gates of the mysterious park. What he was thinking of did not matter, but he was a little impatient at the sudden appearance of his host—whom he had evaded during the afternoon—at his side. The man's manner was full of bursting loquacity and mysterious levity.

Truly, it was a good hour when Dick had arrived at Fontonelles—“just in time.” He could see now what a world of imbeciles was France. What stupid ignorance ruled, what low cunning and low tact could achieve—in

effect, what jugglers and mountebanks, hypocritical priests and licentious and lying *noblesse* went to make up existing society. Ah, there had been a fine excitement, a regular *coup de théâtre* at Fontonelles—the Château yonder; here at the village, where the news was brought by frightened grooms and silly women! He had been in the thick of it all the afternoon! He had examined it—interrogated them like a *juge d'instruction*—winnowed it, sifted it. And what was it all? An attempt by these wretched priests and *noblesse* to revive in the nineteenth century—the age of electricity and Pullman cars—a miserable mediæval legend of an apparition—a miracle! Yes!—One is asked to believe that at the Château yonder was seen last night three times the apparition of Armand de Fontonelles!

Dick started. "Armand de Fontonelles!" He remembered that she had repeated that name.

"Who's he?" he demanded abruptly.

"The first Comte de Fontonelles! When monsieur knows that the first Comte has been dead three hundred years—he will see the imbecility of the affair!"

"Wot did he come back for?" growled Dick.

"Ah!—it was a legend. Consider its artfulness! The Comte Armand had been a hard liver, a dissipated scoundrel, a reckless beast, but a mighty hunter of the stag. It was said that on one of these occasions he had been warned by the apparition of St. Hubert, but he had laughed—for, observe, *he* always jeered at the priests too; hence this story!—and had declared that the flaming cross seen between the horns of the sacred stag was only the torch of a poacher, and he would shoot it! Good! the body of the Comte, dead, but without a wound, was found in the wood the next day, with his discharged arquebus in his hand. The Archbishop of Rouen refused his body the rites of the Church until a number of masses were said every year and

—paid for! One understands! one sees their 'little game'; the Count now appears—he is in purgatory! More masses—more money! There you are. Bah! One understands, too, that the affair takes place, not in a *café* like this—not in a public place—but at a *château* of the *noblesse*, and is seen by"—the proprietor checked the characters on his fingers—"two retainers; one young demoiselle of the *noblesse*, daughter of the *châtelaine* herself; and, my faith, it goes without saying, by a fat priest, the *curé*! In effect—two interested ones! And the priest—his lie is magnificent! Superb! *For he saw the Comte in the picture-gallery—in effect—stepping into his frame!*"

"Oh, come off the roof," said Dick impatiently; "they must have seen *something*, you know. The young lady wouldn't lie!"

Monsieur Ribaud leaned over, with a mysterious, cynical smile, and lowering his voice said—

"You have reason to say so. You have hit it, my friend. There *was* a something! And if we regard the young lady, you shall hear. The story of Mademoiselle de Fontonelles is that she has walked by herself alone in the garden—you observe *alone*—in the moonlight, near the edge of the wood. You comprehend? The mother and the *curé* are in the house—for the time effaced! Here at the edge of the wood—though why she continues, a young demoiselle, to the edge of the wood does not make itself clear—she beholds—her ancestor—as on a pedestal—young, pale, but very handsome and *exalté*—pardon!"

"Nothing," said Dick hurriedly; "go on!"

"She beseeches him why! He says he is lost! She faints away, 'on the instant, there—regard me!—on the edge of the wood—she says. But her mother and *Monsieur le Curé* find her pale, agitated, distressed *on the sofa in the salon*. One is asked to believe that she is transported

through the air like an angel —by the spirit of Armand de Fontonelles. Incredible!"

"Well, wot do *you* think?" said Dick sharply.

The *café* proprietor looked around him carefully, and then lowered his voice significantly—

"A lover!"

"A what!" said Dick, with a gasp.

"A lover!" repeated Ribaud. "You comprehend! Mademoiselle has no *dot*—the property is nothing—the brother has everything. A Mademoiselle de Fontonelles cannot marry out of her class, and the *noblesse* are all poor. Mademoiselle is young—pretty, they say, of her kind. It is an intolerable life at the old Château; Mademoiselle consoles herself!"

Monsieur Ribaud never knew how near he was to the white road below the railing at that particular moment. Luckily Dick controlled himself, and wisely, as M. Ribaud's next sentence showed him.

"A romance—an innocent, foolish liaison, if you like—but all the same, if known of a Mademoiselle de Fontonelles, a compromising—a fatal entanglement. There you are—look! For this, then, all this story of cock and bulls and spirits! Mademoiselle has been discovered with her lover by some one. This pretty story shall stop their mouths!"

"But wot," said Dick brusquely—"wot if the girl was really skeert at something she'd seen, and fainted dead away, as she said she did—and—and"—he hesitated—"some stranger came along and picked her up?"

Monsieur Ribaud looked at him pityingly.

"A Mademoiselle de Fontonelles is picked up by her servants, by her family, but not by the young man in the woods alone. It is even more compromising!"

"Do you mean to say," said Dick furiously, "that the

rag-pickers and sneaks that wade around in the slumgallion of this country would dare to spatter that young gal?"

"I mean to say, yes—assuredly, positively yes!" said Ribaud, rubbing his hands with a certain satisfaction at Dick's fury. "For you comprehend not the position of *la jeune fille* in all France! Ah! in America, the young lady she go everywhere alone; I have seen her—pretty, charming, fascinating—alone with the young man. But here, no! never! Regard me, my friend. The French mother, she say to her daughter's *fiancé*, 'Look! there is my daughter. She has never been alone, with a young man, for five minutes—not even with you. Take her for your wife!' It is monstrous!—it is impossible!—it is so!"

There was a silence of a few minutes, and Dick looked blankly at the iron gates of the park of Fontonelles. Then he said, "Give me a cigar."

M. Ribaud instantly produced his cigar-case. Dick took a cigar, but waved aside the proffered match, and entering the *café*, took from his pocket the letter to Mademoiselle de Fontonelles, twisted it in a spiral, lighted it at a candle, lit his cigar with it, and returning to the verandah, held it in his hand until the last ashes dropped on the floor. Then he said gravely to Ribaud—

"You've treated me like a white man, Frenchy, and I ain't going back on yer—tho' your ways ain't my ways—nohow; but I reckon in this yer matter at the Shotto you're a little too previous! For though I don't as a ginral thing take stock in ghosts, *I believe every word that them folk said up thar.* And," he added, leaning his hand somewhat heavily on Ribaud's shoulder, "if you're the man I take you for, you'll believe it too! And if that chap, Armand de Fontonelles, hadn't hev picked up that gal, at that moment, he would hev deserved to roast in hell another three hundred years! That's why I believe her story. So

you'll let these yer Fontonelles keep their ghosts for all they're worth ; and when you next feel inclined to talk about that girl's *lover*—you'll think of me—and shut your head ! You hear me, Frenchy—I'm shoutin' ! And don't you forget it ! ”

Nevertheless, early the next morning, M. Ribaud accompanied his guest to the railway station and parted from him with great effusion. On his way back an old-fashioned carriage with a postillion passed him. At a sign from its occupant the postillion pulled up, and M. Ribaud, bowing to the dust, approached the window, and the pale, stern face of a dignified white-haired woman of sixty that looked from it.

“ Has he gone ? ” said the lady.

“ Assuredly, madame ; I was with him at the station.”

“ And you think no one saw him ? ”

“ No one, madame, but myself.”

“ And—what kind of a man was he ? ”

M. Ribaud listed his shoulders, threw out his hands despairingly, yet with a world of significance, and said—

“ An American.”

“ Ah ! ”

The carriage drove on, and entered the gates of the Château. And M. Ribaud, *café* proprietor and Social Democrat, straightened himself in the dust, and shook his fist after it.

A Night on the Divide.

WITH the lulling of the wind towards evening it came on to snow—heavily, in straight, quickly succeeding flakes, dropping like white lances from the sky. This was followed by the usual Sierran phenomenon. The deep gorge, which as the sun went down had lapsed into darkness, presently began to reappear ; at first the vanished trail came back as a vividly whitening streak before them ; then the larches and pines that ascended from it like buttresses against the hillsides glimmered in ghostly distinctness, until at last the two slopes curved out of the darkness as if hewn in marble. For the sudden storm, which extended scarcely two miles, had left no trace upon the steep granite face of the high cliffs above ; the snow, slipping silently from them, left them still hidden in the obscurity of night. In the vanished landscape the gorge alone stood out, set in a chaos of cloud and storm through which the moonbeams struggled ineffectually.

It was this unexpected sight which burst upon the occupants of a large covered "station waggon" who had chanced upon the lower end of the gorge. Coming from a still lower altitude, they had known nothing of the storm, which had momentarily ceased, but had left a record of its intensity in nearly two feet of snow. For some moments the horses floundered and struggled on, in what the travellers believed to be some old forgotten drift or avalanche, until the extent and freshness of the fall became

apparent. To add to their difficulties the storm recommenced, and not comprehending its real character and limit they did not dare to attempt to return the way they came. To go on, however, was impossible. In this quandary they looked about them in vain for some other exit from the gorge. The sides of that gigantic white furrow terminated in darkness. Hemmed in from the world in all directions, it might have been their tomb.

But although *they* could see nothing beyond their prison walls, they themselves were perfectly visible from the heights above them. And Jack Tenbrook, quartz miner, who was sinking a tunnel in the rocky ledge of shelf above the gorge, stepping out from his cabin at ten o'clock to take a look at the weather before turning in, could observe quite distinctly the outline of the black waggon, the floundering horses, and the crouching figures by their side, scarcely larger than pygmies on the white surface of the snow, six hundred feet below him. Jack had courage and strength, and the good humour that accompanies them, but he contented himself for a few moments with lazily observing the travellers' discomfiture. He had taken in the situation with a glance ; he would have helped a brother miner or mountaineer although he knew that it could only have been drink or bravado that brought *him* into the gorge in a snowstorm, but it was very evident that these were "green-horns," or Eastern tourists, and it served their stupidity and arrogance right ! He remembered also how he, having once helped an Eastern visitor catch the mustang that had "bucked" him, had been called "my man," and presented with five dollars ; he recalled how he had once spread the humble resources of his cabin before some straying member of the San Francisco party who were "opening" the new railroad, and heard the audible wonder of a lady that a civilised being could live so "coarsely" ! With these

recollections in his mind he managed to survey the distant struggling horses with a fine sense of humour, not unmixed with self-righteousness. There was no real danger in the situation ; it meant at the worst a delay and a camping in the snow till morning, when he would go down to their assistance. They had a spacious travelling equipage, and were, no doubt, well supplied with furs, robes, and provisions for a several hours' journey ; his own pork-barrel was quite empty and his blankets worn. He half smiled, extended his long arms in a decided yawn, and turned back into his cabin to go to bed. Then he cast a final glance around the interior. Everything was all right ; his loaded rifle stood against the wall ; he had just raked the ashes over the embers of his fire to keep it intact till morning. Only one thing slightly troubled him ; a grizzly bear, two-thirds grown, but only half tamed, which had been given to him by a young lady named "Miggles," when that charming and historic girl had decided to accompany her paralytic lover to the San Francisco hospital, was missing that evening. It had been its regular habit to come to the door every night for some sweet biscuit or sugar before going to its lair in the underbrush behind the cabin. Everybody knew it along the length and breadth of Hemlock Ridge, as well as the fact of its being a legacy from the fair exile. No rifle had ever yet been raised against its lazy bulk or the stupid, small-eyed head and ruff of circling hairs made more erect by its well-worn leather collar. Consoling himself with the thought that the storm had probably delayed its return, Jack took off his coat and threw it on his bunk. But from thinking of the storm his thoughts naturally returned again to the impeded travellers below him, and he half mechanically stepped out again in his shirt-sleeves for a final look at them.

But here something occurred that changed his resolution

entirely. He had previously noticed only the three foreshortened, crawling figures around the now stationary waggon bulk. They were now apparently making arrangements to camp for the night. But another figure had been added to the group, and as it stood perched upon a waggon-seat laid on the snow, Jack could see that its outline was not bifurcated like the others. But even that general suggestion was not needed! the little head, the symmetrical curves visible even at that distance, were quite enough to indicate that it was a woman! The easy smile faded from Jack's face, and was succeeded by a look of concern and then of resignation. He had no choice now; he *must* go! There was a woman there, and that settled it. Yet he had arrived at this conclusion from no sense of gallantry, nor, indeed, of chivalrous transport, but as a matter of simple duty to the sex. He was giving up his sleep, was going down six hundred feet of steep trail to offer his services during the rest of the night as much as a matter of course as an Eastern man would have offered his seat in an omnibus to a woman, and with as little expectation of return for his courtesy.

Having resumed his coat, with a bottle of whisky thrust into his pocket, he put on a pair of indiarubber boots reaching to his thighs, and, catching the blanket from his bunk, started with an axe and shovel on his shoulder on his downward journey. When the distance was half completed he shouted to the travellers below; the cry was joyously answered by the three men; he saw the fourth figure, now unmistakably that of a slender youthful woman, in a cloak, helped back into the waggon, as if deliverance was now sure and immediate. But Jack on arriving speedily dissipated that illusive hope; they could only get through the gorge by taking off the wheels of the waggon, placing the axle on rude sledge-runners of split saplings, which,

with their assistance, he would fashion in a couple of hours at his cabin and bring down to the gorge. The only other alternative would be for them to come to his cabin and remain there while he went for assistance to the nearest station, but that would take several hours and necessitate a double journey for the sledge if he was lucky enough to find one. The party quickly acquiesced in Jack's first suggestion.

"Very well," said Jack, "then there's no time to be lost ; unhitch your horses, and we'll dig a hole in that bank for them to stand in out of the snow." This was speedily done. "Now," continued Jack, "you'll just follow me up to my cabin ; it's a pretty tough climb, but I'll want your help to bring down the runners."

Here the man who seemed to be the head of the party—of middle age and a superior, professional type—for the first time hesitated. "I forgot to say that there is a lady with us—my daughter," he began, glancing towards the waggon.

"I reckoned as much," interrupted Jack simply ; "and I allowed to carry her up myself the roughest part of the way. She kin make herself warm and comf'ble in the cabin until we've got the runners ready."

"You hear what our friend says, Amy ?" suggested the gentleman appealingly to the closed leather curtains of the waggon.

There was a pause. The curtain was suddenly drawn aside, and a charming little head and shoulders, furred to the throat and topped with a bewitching velvet cap, were thrust out. In the obscurity little could be seen of the girl's features, but there was a certain wilfulness and impatience in her attitude. Being in the shadow, she had the advantage of the others, particularly of Jack, as his figure was fully revealed in the moonlight against the snow-

bank. Her eyes rested for a moment on his high boots, his heavy moustache, so long as to mingle with the unkempt locks which fell over his broad shoulders, on his huge red hands streaked with black grease from the wagon wheels, and some blood, staunched with snow, drawn from bruises in cutting out brambles in the brush ; on—more awful than all—a monstrous, shiny “specimen” gold ring encircling one of his fingers—on the whisky bottle that shamelessly bulged from his side pocket, and then—slowly dropped her dissatisfied eyelids.

“Why can’t I stay *here*?” she said languidly. “It’s quite nice and comfortable.”

“Because we can’t leave *you* alone, and *we* must go with this gentleman to help him.”

Miss Amy let the tail of her eye again creep shudderingly over this impossible Jack. “I thought the—the gentleman was going to help *us*,” she said drily.

“Nonsense, Amy, you don’t understand,” said her father impatiently. “This gentleman is kind enough to offer to make some sledge-runners for us at his cabin, and we must help him.”

“But I can stay here while you go. I’m not afraid.”

“Yes, but you’re *alone* here—and something might happen.”

“Nothing could happen,” interrupted Jack, quickly and cheerfully. He had flushed at first, but he was now considering that the carrying of a lady as expensively attired and apparently as delicate and particular as this one might be somewhat difficult. “There’s nothin’ that would hurt ye here,” he continued, addressing the velvet cap and furred throat in the darkness, “and if there was it couldn’t get at ye, bein’, so to speak, in the same sort o’ fix as you. So you’re all right,” he added positively.

Inconsistently enough, the young lady did not accept

this as gratefully as might have been imagined, but Jack did not see the slight flash of her eye as, ignoring him, she replied markedly to her father, "I'd much rather stop here, papa."

"And," continued Jack, turning also to her father, "you can keep the waggon and the whole gorge in sight from the trail all the way up. So you can see that everything's all right. Why, I saw *you* from the first." He stopped awkwardly and added, "Come along, the sooner we're off the quicker the job's over."

"Pray don't delay the gentleman and—the job," said Miss Amy sweetly.

Reassured by Jack's last suggestion, her father followed him with the driver and the second man of the party, a youngish and somewhat undistinctive individual, but to whose gallant anxieties Miss Amy responded effusively. Nevertheless the young lady had especially noted Jack's confession that he had seen them when they first entered the gorge. "And I suppose," she added to herself mentally, "that he sat there with his boozing companions, laughing and jeering at our struggles."

But when the sound of her companions' voices died away, and their figures were swallowed up in the darkness behind the snow, she forgot all this, and much else that was mundane and frivolous, in the impressive and majestic solitude which seemed to descend upon her from the obscurity above. At first it was accompanied with a slight thrill of vague fear, but this passed presently into that profound peace which the mountains alone can give their lonely or perturbed children. It seemed to her that Nature was never the same on the great plains where men and cities always loomed into such ridiculous proportions, as when the Great Mother raised herself to comfort them with smiling hillsides, or encompassed them and drew them

closer in the loving arms of her mountains. The long white *cañada* stretched before her in a purity that did not seem of the earth; the vague bulk of the mountains rose on either side of her in a mystery that was not of this life. Yet it was not oppressive; neither was its restfulness and quiet suggestive of obliviousness and slumber: on the contrary, the highly rarefied air seemed to give additional keenness to her senses; her hearing had become singularly acute; her eyesight pierced the uttermost extremity of the gorge, lit by the full moon that occasionally shone through slowly drifting clouds. Her nerves thrilled with a delicious sense of freedom and a strange desire to run or climb. It seemed to her, in her exalted fancy, that these solitudes should be peopled only by a kingly race, and not by such gross and material churls as this mountaineer who helped them. And, I grieve to say—writing of an idealist that *was*, and a heroine that *is* to be—she was getting outrageously hungry.

There were a few biscuits in her travelling-bag, and she remembered that she had been presented with a small jar of California honey at San José. This she took out and opened on the seat before her, and, spreading the honey on the biscuits, ate them with a keen schoolgirl relish and a pleasant suggestion of a sylvan picnic, in spite of the cold. It was all very strange; quite an experience for her to speak of afterwards. People would hardly believe that she had spent an hour or two, all alone, in a deserted waggon in a mountain snow pass. It was an adventure such as one reads of in the magazines. Only something was lacking which the magazines always supplied—something heroic—something done by somebody. If that awful-looking mountaineer—that man with the long hair and moustache—and that horrible gold ring—why such a ring?—was only different! But he was probably gorging beefsteak or venison

with her father and Mr. Waterhouse—men were always such selfish creatures!—and had quite forgotten all about her. It would have been only decent for them to have brought her down something hot ; biscuits and honey were certainly cloying, and somehow didn't agree with the temperature. She was really half starved ! And much *they* cared ! It would just serve them right if something *did* happen to her—or *seem* to happen to her—if only to frighten them. And the pretty face that was turned up in the moonlight wore a charming but decided pout.

Good gracious ! What was that ? The horses were either struggling or fighting in their snow shelters. Then one with a frightened neigh broke from its halter and dashed into the road, only to be plunged snorting and helpless into the drifts. Then the other followed. How silly ! Something had frightened them. Perhaps only a rabbit or a mole ; horses were such absurdly nervous creatures ! However, it is just as well—somebody would see them or hear them—that neigh was quite human and awful—and they would hurry down to see what was the matter. *She* couldn't be expected to get out and look after the horses in the snow. Anyhow *she wouldn't !* *She* was a good deal safer where she was ; it might have been rats or mice about that frightened them ! Goodness !

She was still watching with curious wonder the continued fright of the animals, when suddenly she felt the waggon half bumped, half lifted from behind. It was such a lazy, deliberate movement that for a moment she thought it came from the party who had returned noiselessly with the runners. She scrambled over to the back seat, unbuttoned the leather curtain, lifted it, but nothing was to be seen. Consequently, with feminine quickness, she said, “I see you perfectly, Mr. Waterhouse—don't be silly !” But at this moment there was another shock to the waggon, and

from beneath it arose what at first seemed to her to be an uplifting of the drift itself, but, as the snow was shaken away from its heavy bulk, proved to be the enormous head and shoulders of a bear!

Yet even then she was not *wholly* frightened, for the snout that confronted her had a feeble inoffensiveness; the small eyes were bright with an eager, almost childish, curiosity rather than a savage ardour, and the whole attitude of the creature lifted upon its hind legs was circus-like and ludicrous rather than aggressive. She was enabled to say with some dignity, "Go away—Shoo!" and to wave her luncheon-basket at it with exemplary firmness. But here the creature laid one paw on the back seat as if to steady itself, with the singular effect of collapsing the whole side of the waggon, and then opened its mouth as if in some sort of inarticulate reply. But the revelation of its red tongue, its glistening teeth, and, above all, the hot, suggestive fume of its breath, brought the first scream from the lips of Miss Amy. It was real and convincing; the horses joined in it; the three screamed together! The bear hesitated for an instant, then, catching sight of the honey-pot on the front seat, which the shrinking-back of the young girl had disclosed, he slowly reached forward his other paw and attempted to grasp it. This exceedingly simple movement, however, at once doubled up the front seat, sent the honey-pot a dozen feet into the air, and dropped Miss Amy upon her knees in the bed of the waggon. The combined mental and physical shock was too much for her; she instantly and sincerely fainted; the last thing in her ears amidst this wreck of matter being the "wheep" of a bullet and the sharp crack of a rifle.

She recovered her consciousness in the flickering light

of a fire of bark, that played upon the rafters of a roof thatched with bark and upon a floor of strewn and shredded bark. She even suspected she was lying upon a mattress of bark underneath the heavy bearskin she could feel and touch. She had a delicious sense of warmth, and, mingled with this strange spicing of woodland freedom, even a sense of home protection. And, surely enough, looking around, she saw her father at her side.

He briefly explained the situation. They had been at first attracted by the cry of the frightened horses and their plunging, which they could see distinctly, although they saw nothing else. "But, Mr. Tenbrook—"

"Mr. Who?" said Amy, staring at the rafters.

"The owner of this cabin—the man who helped us—caught up his gun, and calling us to follow, ran like lightning down the trail. At first we followed blindly, and unknowingly, for we could only see the struggling horses, who, however, seemed to be *alone*, and the waggon from which you did not seem to have stirred. Then, for the first time, my dear child, we suddenly saw your danger. Imagine how we felt as that hideous brute rose up in the road and began attacking the waggon. We called on Tenbrook to fire, but for some inconceivable reason he did not, although he still kept running at the top of his speed. Then we heard you shriek—"

"I didn't shriek, papa; it was the horses."

"My child, I knew your voice."

"Well, it was only a *very little* scream—because I had tumbled." The colour was coming back rapidly to her pink cheeks.

"And then, at your scream, Tenbrook fired!—it was a wonderful shot for the distance, so everybody says—and killed the bear, though Tenbrook says it oughtn't to. I believe he wanted to capture the creature alive. They've

queer notions, those hunters. And then, as you were unconscious, he brought you up here."

"Who brought me?"

"Tenbrook; he's as strong as a horse. Slung you up on his shoulders like a feather pillow."

"Oh!"

"And then, as the waggon required some repairing from the brute's attack, we concluded to take it leisurely, and let you rest here for awhile."

"And where is—where are *they*?"

"At work on the waggon. I determined to stay with you, though you are perfectly safe here."

"I suppose I ought—to thank—this man, papa?"

"Most certainly, though, of course, *I* have already done so. But he was rather curt in reply. These half-savage men have such singular ideas. He said the beast would never have attacked you except for the honey-pot which it scented. That's absurd."

"Then it's all my fault?"

"Nonsense! How could *you* know?"

"And I've made all this trouble. And frightened the horses. And spoilt the waggon. And made the man run down and bring me up here when he didn't want to!"

"My dear child! Don't be idiotic! Amy! Well, really!"

For the idiotic one was 'really wiping two large tears from her lovely blue eyes. She subsided into an ominous silence, broken by a single sniffle. "Try to go to sleep, dear; you've had quite a shock to your nerves," added her father soothingly. She continued silent, but not sleeping.

"I smell coffee."

"Yes, dear."

"You've been having coffee, papa?"

"We *did* have some, I think," said the wretched man apologetically, though why he could not determine.

"Before I came up? while the bear was trying to eat me?"

"No, after."

"I've a horrid taste in my mouth. It's the honey. I'll never eat honey again. Never!"

"Perhaps it's the whisky."

"What?"

"The whisky. You were quite faint and chilled, you know. We gave you some."

"Out of—that—black—bottle?"

"Yes."

Another silence.

"I'd like some coffee. I don't think *he'd* begrudge me that, if he did save my life."

"I daresay there's some left." Her father at once bestirred himself, and presently brought her some coffee in a tin cup. It was part of Miss Amy's rapid convalescence, or equally of her debilitated condition, that she made no comment on the vessel. She lay for some moments looking curiously around the cabin; she had no doubt it had a worse look in the daylight, but somehow the firelight brought out a wondrous luxury of colour in the bark floor and thatching. Besides, it was not "smelly," as she feared it would be; on the contrary, the spicy aroma of the woods was always dominant. She remembered that it was this that always made a greasy, oily picnic tolerable. She raised herself on her elbow, seeing which her father continued confidently, "Perhaps, dear, if you sat up for a few moments you might be strong enough presently to walk down with me to the waggon. It would save time."

Amy instantly lay down again. "I don't know what you can be thinking of, papa. After this shock really I don't

feel as if I could *stand* alone much less *walk*. But, of course," with pathetic resignation, "if you and Mr. Waterhouse supported me, perhaps I might crawl a few steps at a time."

"Nonsense, Amy. Of course, this man Tenbrook will carry you down as he brought you up. Only I thought—but there are steps; they are coming now. No! it is only *he*."

The sound of crackling in the underbrush was followed by a momentary darkening of the open door of the cabin. It was the tall figure of the mountaineer. But he did not even make the pretence of entering; standing at the door, he delivered his news to the interior generally. It was to the effect that everything was ready, and the two other men were even then harnessing the horses. Then he drew back into the darkness.

"Papa," said Amy, in a sudden frightened voice, "I've lost my bracelet."

"Haven't you dropped it somewhere there in the bunk?" asked her father.

"No. It's on the floor of the waggon. I remember now it fell off when I tumbled! And it will be trodden upon and crushed! Couldn't you run down, ahead of me, and warn them, papa dear? Mr. Tenbrook will have to go *so* slowly with me." She tumbled out of the bunk with singular alacrity, shook herself and her skirts into instantaneous gracefulness, and fitted the velvet cap on her straying hair. Then she said hurriedly, "Run quick, papa dear, and as you go call him in and say I am quite ready."

Thus adjured, the obedient parent disappeared in the darkness. With him also disappeared Miss Amy's singular alacrity. Sitting down carefully again on the edge of the bunk, she leaned against the post with a certain indefinable languor that was as touching as it was graceful. I need not

tell any feminine readers that there was no dissimulation in all this—no coquetry, no ostentation—and that the young girl was perfectly sincere! But the masculine reader might like to know that the simple fact was that, since she had regained consciousness, she had been filled with remorse for her capricious and ungenerous rejection of Tenbrook's proffered service. More than that, she felt she had perilled her life in that moment of folly, and that this man—this hero—had saved her. For hero he was, even if he did not fulfil her ideal—it was only *she* that was not a heroine. Perhaps if he had been more like what she wished she would have felt this less keenly; Love leaves little room for the exercise of moral ethics. So Miss Amy Forester, being a good girl at bottom, and not exactly loving this man, felt towards him a frank and tender consideration which a more romantic passion would have shrunk from showing. Consequently, when Tenbrook entered a moment later, he found Amy paler and more thoughtful, but, as he fancied, much prettier than before, looking up at him with eyes of the sincerest solicitude.

Nevertheless, he remained standing near the door, as if indicating a possible intrusion, his face wearing a look of lowering abstraction. It struck her that this might be the effect of his long hair and general uncouthness, and this only spurred her to a fuller recognition of his other qualities.

"I am afraid," she began, with a charming embarrassment, "that instead of resting satisfied with your kindness in carrying me up here, I will have to burden you again with my dreadful weakness, and ask you to carry me down also. But all this seems so little after what you have just done—and for which I can never, *never* hope to thank you!" She clasped her two little hands together, holding her gloves between, and brought them down upon her lap in a gesture as prettily helpless as it was unaffected.

"I have done scarcely anything," he said, glancing away towards the fire, "and—your father has thanked me."

"You have saved my life!"

"No! no!" he said quickly. "Not that! You were in no danger, except from my rifle, had I missed."

"I see," she said eagerly, with a little posthumous thrill at having been after all a kind of heroine, "and it was a wonderful shot, for you were so careful not to touch me."

"Please don't say any more," he said, with a slight movement of half awkwardness, half impatience. "It was a rough job, but it's over now."

He stopped and chafed his red hands abstractedly together. She could see that he had evidently just washed them—and the glaring ring was more in evidence than ever. But the thought gave her an inspiration.

"You'll at least let me shake hands with you!" she said, extending both her own with childish frankness.

"Hold on, Miss Forester," he said, with sudden desperation. "It ain't the square thing! Look here! I can't play this thing on you—I can't let you play it on me any longer! You weren't in any danger—you *never* were! That bear was only a half-wild thing I helped to ra'r myself! It's taken sugar from my hand night after night at the door of this cabin as it might have taken it from yours here if it was alive now. It slept night after night in the brush, not fifty yards away. The morning's never come yet—till now," he said hastily, to cover an odd break in his voice, "when it didn't brush along the whole side of this cabin to kinder wake me up and say "So long," afore it browsed away into the cañon. There ain't a man along the whole Divide who didn't know it; that ain't a man along the whole Divide that would have drawn a bead or pulled a trigger on it till now. It never had an enemy but the bees; it never even

knew why horses and cattle were frightened of it. It wasn't much of a pet, you'd say, Miss Forester ; it wasn't much to meet a lady's eye ; but we of the woods must take our friends where we find 'em and of our own kind. It ain't no fault of yours, miss, that you didn't know it—it ain't no fault of yours what happened ; but when it comes to your *thanking* me for it, why, it's—it's rather rough, you see—and gets me." He stopped short as desperately and as abruptly as he had begun, and stared blankly at the fire.

A wave of pity and shame swept over the young girl and left its high tide on her cheek. But even then it was closely followed by the feminine instinct of defence and defiance. The *real* hero—the *gentleman*—she reasoned bitterly, would have spared her all this knowledge.

"But why," she said with knitted brows—"why, if you knew it was so precious and so harmless—why did you fire upon it?"

"Because," he said, almost fiercely turning upon her, "because you *screamed*, and *then I knew it had frightened you!*" He stopped instantly as she momentarily recoiled from him, but the very brusqueness of his action had dislodged a tear from his dark eyes that fell warm on the back of her hand, and seemed to blot out the indignity. "Listen, miss," he went on hurriedly, as if to cover up his momentary unmanliness. "I knew the bear was missing to-night, and when I heard the horses scurrying about I reckoned what was up. I knew no harm could come to you, for the horses were unharnessed and away from the waggon. I pelted down that trail ahead of them all like grim death, calkilatin' to get there before the bear ; they wouldn't have understood me ; I was too high up to call to the creature when he did come out, and I kinder hoped you wouldn't see him. Even when he turned towards the waggon, I knew it wasn't

you he was after, but suthin' else, and I kinder hoped, miss, that you, being different and quicker-minded than the rest, would see it too. All the while them folks were yellin' behind me to fire—as if I didn't know my work. I was half-way down—and then you screamed! And then I forgot everything—everything but standing clear of hitting you—and I fired. I was that savage that I wanted to believe that he'd gone mad and would have touched you, till I got down there and found the honey-pot lying alongside of him. But there—it's all over now! I wouldn't have let on a word to you, only I couldn't bear to take *your thanks* for it, and I couldn't bear to have you thinking me a brute for dodgin' them." He stopped, walked to the fire, leaned against the chimney under the shallow pretext of kicking the dull embers into a blaze, which, however, had only the effect of revealing his two glistening eyes as he turned back again and came towards her. "Well," he said, with an ineffectual laugh, "it's all over now, it's all in the day's work, I reckon—and now, miss, if you're ready, and will just fix yourself your own way so as to ride easy, I'll carry you down." And slightly bending his strong figure, he dropped on one knee beside her with extended arms.

Now it is one thing to be carried up a hill in temperate, unconscious blood and practical business fashion by a tall, powerful man with steadfast glowering eyes, but quite another thing to be carried down again by the same man, who has been crying, and when you are conscious that you are going to cry too, and your tears may be apt to mingle. So Miss Amy Forester said, "Oh, wait, please! Sit down a moment. Oh, Mr. Tenbrook, I am so very, very sorry," and, clapping her hand to her eyes, burst into tears.

"Oh, please, please don't, Miss Forester," said Jack,

sitting down on the end of the bunk with frightened eyes, "Please don't do that! It ain't worth it. I'm only a brute to have said anything."

"No, no! You are *so* noble! *so* forgiving!" sobbed Miss Forester, "and *I* have made you go and kill the only thing you cared for, that was all your own."

"No, miss—not all my own, either—and that makes it so rough. For it was only left in trust with me by a friend. It was her only companion."

"*Her* only companion?" echoed Miss Forester, sharply lifting her bowed head.

"Except," said Jack hurriedly, miscomprehending the emphasis with masculine fatuity—"except the dying man for whom she lived and sacrificed her whole life. She gave me this ring, to always remind me of my trust. I suppose," he added, ruefully looking down upon it, "it's no use now. I'd better take it off."

Then Amy eyed the monstrous object with angelic simplicity. "I certainly should," she said with infinite sweetness; "it would only remind you of your loss. But," she added, with a sudden, swift, imploring look of her blue eyes, "if you could part with it to me, it would be such a reminder and token of—of your forgiveness."

Jack instantly handed it to her. "And now," he said, "let me carry you down."

"I think," she said hesitatingly, "that—I had better try to walk," and she rose to her feet.

"Then I shall know that you have not forgiven me," said Jack sadly.

"But I have no right to trouble—"

Alas! she had no time to finish her polite objection, for the next moment she felt herself lifted in the air, smelt the bark thatch within an inch of her nose, saw the firelight vanish behind her, and subsiding into his

curved arms as in a hammock the two passed forth into the night together.

"I can't find your bracelet anywhere, Amy," said her father, when they reached the waggon.

"It was on the floor in the hut," said Amy reproachfully. "But, of course, you never thought of that!"

My pen halts with some diffidence between two conclusions to this veracious chronicle. As they agree in result, though not in theory or intention, I may venture to give them both. To one coming from the lips of the charming heroine herself I naturally yield the precedence. "Oh, the bear story! I don't really remember whether that was before I was engaged to John or after. But I had known him for some time; father introduced him at the Governor's ball at Sacramento. Let me see!—I think it was in the winter of '56. Yes! it was very amusing; I always used to charge John with having trained that bear to attack our carriage so that he might come in as a hero! Oh, of course, there are a hundred absurd stories about him—they used to say that he lived all alone in a cabin like a savage, and all that sort of thing, and was a friend of a dubious woman in the locality, whom the common people made a heroine of—Miggles, or Wiggles, or some such preposterous name. But look at John, there—can you conceive it?" The listener, glancing at a very handsome, clean-shaven fellow, faultlessly attired, could not conceive such an absurdity. So I therefore simply give the opinion of Joshua Bixley, Superintendent of the Long Divide Tunnel Company, for what it is worth: "I never took much stock in that bear story, and its captivating old Forester's daughter. Old Forester knew a thing or two, and when he was out here consolidating tunnels he found out that Jack Tenbrook

was about headed for the big lead, and brought him out and introduced him to Amy. You see, Jack, clear grit as he was, was mighty rough style, and about as simple as they make 'em, and they had to get up something to account for that girl's taking a shine to him. But they seem to be happy enough—and what are you going to do about it?"

And I transfer this philosophic query to the reader.

The Youngest Prospector in Calaveras.

HE was scarcely eight when it was believed that he could have reasonably laid claim to the above title. But he never did. He was a small boy, intensely freckled to the roots of his tawny hair, with even a suspicion of it in his almond-shaped but somewhat full eyes, which were the greenish hue of a ripe gooseberry. All this was very unlike his parents, from whom he diverged in resemblance in that fashion so often seen in the South-West of America, as if the youth of the boundless West had struck a new note of independence and originality, overriding all conservative and established rules of heredity. Something of this was also shown in a singular and remarkable reticence and firmness of purpose, quite unlike his family or schoolfellows. His mother was the wife of a teamster, who had apparently once "dumped" his family, consisting of a boy and two girls, on the roadside at Burnt Spring, with the canvas roof of his waggon to cover them, while he proceeded to deliver other freight, not so exclusively his own, at other stations along the road, returning to them on distant and separate occasions with slight additions to their stock, habitation, and furniture. In this way the canvas roof was finally shingled and the hut enlarged, and under the quickening of a smiling California sky and the forcing of a teeming California soil, the chance-sown seed took root, and became known as Medliker's Ranch, or "Medliker's," with its bursting garden patch and its three sheds or "lean-to's."

The girls helped their mother in a childish, imitative way ; the boy, John Bunyan, after a more desultory and original fashion—when he was not “going to” or ostensibly “coming from” school, for he was seldom actually there. Something of this fear was in the mind of Mrs. Medliker one morning as she looked up from the kettle she was scrubbing, with premonition of “more worritting,” to behold the Reverend Mr. Staples, the local minister, hale John Bunyan Medliker into the shanty with one hand. Letting Johnny go, he placed his back against the door and wiped his face with a red handkerchief. Johnny dropped into a chair, furtively glancing at the arm by which Mr. Staples had dragged him, and feeling it with the other hand to see if it was really longer.

“I’ve been requested by the schoolmaster,” said the Rev. Mr. Staples, putting his handkerchief back into his broad felt hat with a gasping smile, “to bring our young friend before you for a matter of counsel and discipline. I have done so, Sister Medliker, with some difficulty”—he looked down at John Bunyan, who again felt his arm and was satisfied that it *was* longer—“but we must do our dooty, even with difficulty to ourselves and, perhaps, to others. Our young friend John Bunyan stands on a giddy height—on slippery places, and,” continued Mr. Staples, with a lofty disregard to consecutive metaphor, “his feet are taking fast hold of destruction.” Here the child drew a breath of relief, possibly at the prospect of being on firm ground of any kind at last ; but Sister Medliker, to whom the Staples style of exordium had only a Sabbath significance, turned to her offspring abruptly—

“And what’s these yer doin’s now, John? and me a slavin’ to send ye to school?”

Thus appealed to, Johnny looked for a reply at his feet, at his arm, and at the kettle. Then he said: “*I* ain’t

done nothin', but *he*"—indicating Staples—"hez been nigh onter pullin' off my arm!"

"It's now almost a week ago," continued Mr. Staples, waving aside the interruption with a smile of painful Christian tolerance, "or perhaps ten days—I won't be too sure—that the schoolmaster discovered that Johnny had in his possession two or three flakes of fine river gold—each of the value of half a dollar, or perhaps $62\frac{1}{2}$ cents. On being questioned where he got them he refused to say; although subsequently he alleged that he had "found" them. It being a single instance, he was given the benefit of the doubt, and nothing more was said about it. But a few days after he was found trying to pass off, at Mr. Smith's store, two other flakes of a different size, and a small nugget of the value of four or five dollars. At this point I was called in; he repeated to me, I grieve to say, the same untruthfulness, and when I suggested to him the obvious fact that he had taken it from one of the miners' sluice-boxes and committed the grievous sin of thest, he wickedly denied it—so that we are prevented from carrying out the Christian command of restoring it even *one-fold*, instead of four or five-fold, as the Mosaic Law might have required. We were, alas! unable to ascertain anything from the miners themselves, though I grieve to say they one and all agreed that their "take" that week was not at all what they had expected. I even went so far as to admit the possibility of his own statement, and besought him at least to show me where he had found it. He had at first refused with great stubbornness of temper, but later consented to accompany me privately this afternoon to the spot." Mr. Staples paused, and sinking his voice, gloomily, and with his eyes fixed upon Johnny, continued slowly: "When I state that, after several times trying to evade me on the way, he finally led me to the top of Bald Hill, where

there is not a scrap of soil, and not the slightest indication, and still persisted that he found it *there*, you will understand, Sister Medliker, the incorrigibility of his conduct, and how he has added the sin of "false witness" to his breaking of the Eighth Commandment. But I leave him to your Christian discipline! Let us hope that if, through his stiff-necked obduracy, he has haply escaped the vengeance of man's law, he will not escape the rod of the domestic tabernacle."

"Ye kin leave him to me," said Mrs. Medliker, in her anxiety to get rid of the parson, assuming a confidence she was far from feeling.

"So be it, Sister Medliker," said Staples, drawing a long, satisfactory breath; "and let us trust that when you have rastled with his flesh and spirit, you will bring us joyful tidings to Wednesday's Mothers' Meeting."

He clapped his soft hat on his head, cast another glance at the wicked Johnny, opened the door with his hand behind him, and backed himself into the road.

"Now, Johnny," said Mrs. Medliker, setting her lips together as the door closed, "look me right in the face, and say where you stole that gold."

But Johnny evidently did not think that his mother's face at that moment offered any moral support, for he did not look at her; but, after gazing at the kettle, said slowly: "I didn't steal no gold."

"Then," said Mrs. Medliker triumphantly, "if ye didn't steal it, you'd say right off *how* ye got it."

Children are often better logicians than their elders. To John Bunyan the stealing of gold and the mere refusal to say where he got it were two distinct and separate things; that the negation of the second proposition meant the affirmation of the first he could not accept. But then children are also imitative and fearful of the older intellect.

It struck Johnny that his mother might be right, and that to her it really meant the same thing. So, after a moment's silence, he replied more confidently, "I suppose I stoled it."

But he was utterly unprepared for the darkening change in his mother's face, and her furious accents. "You stole it?—you *stole* it, you limb! And you sit there and brazenly tell me! Who did you steal it from? Tell me quick, afore I wring it out of you!"

Completely astounded and bewildered at this new turn of affairs, Johnny again fell back upon the dreadful truth, and gasped "I don't know."

"You don't know—you devil! Did you take it from Frazer's?"

"No."

"From the Simmons Brothers?"

"No."

"From the Blazing Star Company?"

"No."

"From a Store?"

"No."

"Then, in created Goodness!—*where* did you get it?"

Johnny raised his brown gooseberry eyes for a single instant to his mother's and said: "I found it."

Mrs. Medliker gasped again and stared hopelessly at the ceiling. Yet she was conscious of a certain relief. After all, it was *possible* that he had found it—liar as he undoubtedly was.

"Then why don't you say where, you awful child?"

"Don't want to!"

Johnny would have liked to add that he saw no reason why he should tell. Other people who found gold were not obliged to tell. There was Jim Brody, who had struck a lead and kept the locality secret. Nobody forced him to tell. Nobody called him a thief; nobody had dragged him

about by the arm until he showed it. Why was it wrong that a little boy should find gold? It wasn't agin the Commandments. Mr. Staples had never got up and said "Thou shalt not find gold!" His mother had never made him pray not to find it! The schoolmaster had never read him awful stories of boys who found gold and never said anything about it, and so came to a horrid end. All this crowded his small boy's mind, and, crowding, choked his small boy's utterance.

"You jest wait till your father comes home," said Mrs. Medliker, "and he'll see whether you 'want to' or not. And now get yourself off to bed and stay there."

Johnny knew that his father—whose teams had increased to five waggons, and whose route extended forty miles farther—was not due for a week, and that the catastrophe was yet remote. His present punishment he had expected. He went into the adjoining bedroom, which he occupied with his sister, and began to undress. He lingered for some time over one stocking, and finally cautiously removed from it a small piece of flake gold which he had kept concealed all day under his big toe, to the great discomfort of that member. But this was only a small, ordinary self-martyrdom of boyhood. He scratched a boyish hieroglyphic on the metal, and when his mother's back was turned scraped a small hole in the adobe wall, inserted the gold in it, and covered it up with a plaster made of the moistened *débris*. It was safe—so was his secret—for it need not, perhaps, be stated here that Johnny *had* told the truth, and *had* honestly found the gold! But where?—yes, that was his own secret! And now Johnny, with the instinct of all young animals, dismissed the whole subject from his mind, and, reclining comfortably upon his arm, fell into an interesting study of the habits of the red ant as exemplified in a crack of the adobe wall, and with the aid of a

burnt match succeeded in diverting for the rest of the afternoon the attention of a whole laborious colony.

The next morning, however, brought trouble to him in the curiosity of his sisters, heightened by their belief that he could at any moment be taken off to prison—which was their understanding of their mother's story. I grieve to say that to them this invested him with a certain romantic heroism, from the gratification of which the hero himself was not exempt. Nevertheless, he successfully evaded their questioning, and on broader impersonal grounds. As girls it was none of their business! He wasn't a-going to tell them *his* secrets! And what did they know about gold, anyway? They couldn't tell it from brass! The attitude of his mother was, however, still perplexing. She was no longer actively indignant, but treated him with a mysterious reserve that was the more appalling. The fact was that she no longer believed in his theft—indeed, she had never seriously accepted it—but his strange reticence and secretiveness piqued her curiosity, and even made her a little afraid of him. The capacity for keeping a secret she believed was manlike, and reminded her—for no reason in the world—of Jim Medliker, her husband, whom she feared. Well, she would let them fight it out between them. More than that, she was finally obliged to sink her reserve in employing him in the necessary "chores" for the house, and he was sent on an errand to the country store at the cross-roads. But he first extracted his gold flake from the wall, and put it in his pocket.

On arriving at the store, it was plain even to his boyish perceptions that the minister had circulated his miserable story. Two or three of the customers spoke to each other in a whisper, and looked at him. More than that, when he began his homeward journey, he saw that two of the loungers were evidently following him. Half in timidity

and half in boyish mischief, he once or twice strayed from the direct road, and snatched a fearful joy in observing their equal divergence. As he passed Mr. Staples's house he saw that reverend gentleman sneak out of his back gate, and, without seeing the two others, join in the inquisitorial procession. But the events of the past day had had their quickening effect upon Johnny's intellect. A brilliantly wicked thought struck him. As he was passing a perfectly bare spot on the road he managed, without being noticed, to cast his glittering flake of gold on the sterile ground at the other side of the road, where the minister's path would lie. Then, at a point where the road turned, he concealed himself in the brush. The Reverend Mr. Staples hurried forward as he lost sight of the boy in the sweep of the road, but halted suddenly. Johnny's heart leaped. The minister looked around him, stooped, picked up the piece of gold, thrust it hurriedly in his waistcoat pocket, and continued his way. When he reached the turn of the road, before passing it, he availed himself of his solitude to pause and again examine the treasure, and again return it to his pocket. But, to Johnny's surprise, he here turned back, walked quickly to the spot where he had found it, carefully examined the locality, kicking the loose soil and stones around with his feet until he had apparently satisfied himself that there was no more, and no gold-bearing indications in the soil. At this moment, however, the two other inquisitors came in sight, and Mr. Staples turned quickly and hurried on. Before he had passed the brush where Johnny was concealed the two men overtook him and exchanged greetings. They both spoke of "Johnny" and his crime, of having followed him with a view of finding out where he went to procure his gold, and of his having again evaded them. Mr. Staples agreed with their purpose, but, to Johnny's intense astonishment, *said nothing about*

his own find! When they had passed on, the boy slipped from his place of concealment and followed them at a distance until his own house came in view. Here the two men diverged, but the minister continued on towards the other "store" and post-office on the main road.

He would have told his mother what he had seen, and his surprise that the minister had not spoken of finding the gold to the other men, but he was checked:—first by his mother's attitude towards him, which was clearly the same as the minister's, and, second, by the knowledge that she would have condemned his dropping the gold in the minister's path—though he knew not *why*—or asked his reason for it, which he was equally sure he could not formulate, though he also knew not why. But that evening, as he was returning from the spring with water, he heard the minister's voice in the kitchen. It had been a day of surprises and revelations to Johnny, but the climax seemed to be reached as he entered the room; and he now stood transfixed and open-mouthed as he heard Mr. Staples say—

"It's all very well, Sister Medliker, to comfort your heart with vain hopes and delusions. A mother's leanin's is the soul's deceivin's—and yer leanin' on a broken reed. If the boy truly found that gold he'd have come to ye and said: 'Behold, mother, I have found gold in the highways and byeways—rejoice and be exceedin' glad!' and hev poured it inter yer lap. Yes," continued Mr. Staples aggressively to the boy, as he saw him stagger back with his pail in hand—"yes, sir, *that* would have been the course of a Christian child!"

For a moment Johnny felt the blood boiling in his ears, and a thousand words seemed crowding in his throat. "Then!" he gasped and choked. "Then!" he began again—and stopped with the suffocation of indignation.

But Mr. Staples saw in his agitation only an awakened conscience, and, nudging Mrs. Medliker, leaned eagerly forward for a reply. "Then," he repeated, with suave encouragement—"go on, Johnny! Speak it out!"

"Then," said Johnny, in a high, shrill falsetto that startled them—"then wot for did *you* pick up that piece o' gold in the road this arternoon, and say nothin' of it to the men who followed ye? Ye did; I seed yer! And ye didn't say nothin' of it to anybody; and ye ain't sayin' nothin' of it now ter Maw! and ye've got it in yer vest! And it's mine, and I dropped it! Gimme it."

Astonishment, confusion, and rage swelled and empurpled Staples's face. It was *his* turn to gasp for breath. Yet in the same moment he made an angry dash at the boy. But Mrs. Medliker interfered. This was an entirely new feature in the case. Great is the power of gold. A single glance at the minister's confusion had convinced her that Johnny's accusation was true, and it was Johnny's *money*—constructively *hers*—that the minister was concealing. His mere possession of that gold had more effect in straightening out her loose logic than any sense of hypocrisy.

"You leave the boy be, Brother Staples," said Mrs. Medliker sharply. "I reckon wot's his is hisn, spite of whar he got it."

Mr. Staples saw his mistake, and smiled painfully as he stumbled in his waistcoat pocket. "I believe I *did* pick up something," he said, "that may or may not have been gold, but I have dropped it again or thrown it away, and really it is of little concern in our moral lesson. For we have only *his* word that it was really his! How do we *know* it?"

"Cos it has my marks on it," said Johnny quickly; "it had a criss-cross I scratched on it. I kin tell it good enuf."

Mr. Staples turned suddenly pale, and rose. "Of course," he said to Mrs. Medliker, with painful dignity,

"if you set so much value upon a mere worldly trifle, I will endeavour to find it. It may be in my other pocket." He backed out of the door in his usual fashion, but instantly went over to the post-office, where, as he afterwards alleged, he had changed the ore for coin in a moment of inadvertence. But Johnny's hieroglyphics were found on it, and in some mysterious way the story got about. It had two effects that Johnny did not dream of. It had forced his mother into an attitude of complicity with him ; it had raised up for him a single friend. Jake Stielitzer, quartz miner, had declared that Burnt Spring was "playing it low down" on Johnny ! That if they really believed that the boy took gold from their sluice-boxes it was their duty to watch their *claims* and not the boy. That it was only their excuse for "snooping" after him, and they only wanted to find his "strike," which was as much his as their claims were their own ! All this with great proficiency of epithet, but also a still more recognised proficiency with the revolver, which made the former respected.

"That's the real nigger in the fence, Johnny," said Jake, twirling his huge moustache, "and they only want to know where your lead is—and don't yer tell 'em ! Let 'em bile over with waitin' first, and that'll put the fire out. Does yer Pop know?"

"No," said Johnny.

"Nor yer Mar?"

"No."

Jake whistled. "Then it's only *you*, yourself?"

Johnny nodded violently, and his brown eyes glistened.

"It's a heap of information to be packed away in a chap of your size, Johnny. Makes you feel kinder crowded inside—eh? *Must* keep it to yourself, eh?"

"Have to," said Johnny, with a gasp that was a little like a sigh.

It caused Jake to look at him attentively. "See here, Johnny," he said, "now ef ye wanted to tell somebody about it—somebody as was a friend of yours—*Me*, fr instance?"

Johnny slowly withdrew the freckled, warty little hand that had been resting confidingly in Jake's, and gently sidled away from him. Jake burst into a loud laugh.

"All right, Johnny boy," he said, with a hearty slap upon the boy's back, "keep yer head shut ef yer wanter! Only ef anybody else comes bummin' 'round ye, like this, jest turn him over *to me*, and I'll lift him outer his boots!"

Jake kept his word, and his distance thereafter. Indeed, it was after this first and last conversation with him that the influence of his powerful protection was so strong that all active criticisms of Johnny ceased, and only a respectful surveillance of his movements lingered in the settlement. I do not know that this was altogether distasteful to the child; it would have been strange, indeed, if he had not felt at times exalted by this mysterious influence that he seemed to have acquired over his fellow-creatures. If he were merely hunting blackberries in the brush, he was always sure, sooner or later, to find a ready hand offered to help and accompany him; if he trapped a squirrel or tracked down a wild bees' hoard, he generally found a smiling face watching him. Prospectors sometimes stopped him with: "Well, Johnny! as a chipper and far-minded boy, now *whar* would *you* advise us to dig?" I grieve to say that Johnny was not above giving his advice—and that it was invariably of not the smallest use to the recipient.

And so the days passed. Mr. Medliker's absence was protracted, and the hour of retribution and punishment still seemed far away. The blackberries ripened and dried upon the hillside; and the squirrels had gathered their hoards; the bees no longer came and went through the

thicket, but Johnny was still in daily mysterious possession of his grains of gold! And then one day—after the fate of all heroic humanity—his secret was imperilled by the blandishments and machinations of the all-powerful sex.

Florry Fraser was a little playmate of Johnny's. Why, with his doubts of his elder sister's intelligence and integrity, he should have selected a child two years younger, and of singular simplicity, was, like his other secret, his own. What *she* saw in him to attract her was equally strange; possibly it may have been his brown gooseberry eyes or his warts, but she was quite content to trot after him, like a young squaw, carrying his "bow-arrow," or his "trap," supremely satisfied to share his woodland knowledge or his scantier confidences. For nobody who knew Johnny suspected that she was privy to his great secret. Howbeit, wherever his ragged straw hat, thatched with his tawny hair, was detected in the brush, the little nankeen sunbonnet of Florry was sure to be discerned not far behind. For two weeks they had not seen each other. A fell disease, nurtured in ignorance, dirt, and carelessness, was striking right and left through the valleys of the foothills, and Florry, whose sister had just recovered from an attack, had been sequestered with her. But one morning, as Johnny was bringing his wood from the stack behind the house, he saw, to his intense delight, a picket of the road fence slipped aside by a small red hand, and a moment after Florry squeezed herself through the narrow opening. Her round cheeks were slightly flushed, and there was a scrap of red flannel around her plump throat that heightened the whiteness of her skin.

"My!" said Johnny, with half-real, half-affected admiration, "how splendiferous!"

"Sore frost," said Florry, in a whisper, trying to insert her two chubby fingers between the bandage and her chin.

"I mussent go outer the garden patch! I mussent play in the woods, for I'll be seed! I mussent stay long, for they'll ketch me outer bed!"

"Outer bed?" repeated Johnny, with intense admiration, as he perceived for the first time that Florry was in a flannel nightgown, with bare legs and feet.

"Ess."

Whereupon these two delightful imps chuckled and wagged their heads with a sincere enjoyment that this mere world could not give! Johnny slipped off his shoes and stockings and hurriedly put them on the infant Florry, securing them from falling off with a thick cord. This added to their enjoyment

"We can play cubby house in the stone heap," whispered Florry.

"Hol' on till I tote in this wood," said Johnny. "You hide till I come back."

Johnny swiftly delivered his load with an alacrity he had never shown before. Then they played "cubby house"—not fifty feet from the cabin, with a hushed but guilty satisfaction. But presently it palled. Their domain was too circumscribed for variety. "Robinson Crusoe up the tree" was impossible, as being visible from the house windows. Johnny was at his wits' end. Florry was fretful and fastidious. Then a great thought struck him and left him cold. "If I show you a show, you won't tell?" he said suddenly.

"No."

"Wish yer-madie?"

"Ess."

"Got any penny?"

"No."

"Got any slate pencil?"

"No."

"Ain't got any pins nor nuthin'? You kin go in for a pin."

But Florry had none of childhood's fluctuating currency with her, having, so to speak, no pockets.

"Well," said Johnny, brightening up, "ye kin go in for luv."

The child clipped him with her small arms and smiled, and, Johnny leading the way, they crept on all fours through the thick ferns until they paused before a deep fissure in the soil half overgrown with bramble. In its depths they could hear the monotonous trickle of water. It was really the source of the spring that afterwards reappeared fifty yards nearer the road, and trickled into an unfailing pool known as the Burnt Spring, from the brown colour of the surrounding bracken. It was the water supply of the ranch, and the reason for Mr. Medliker's original selection of that site. Johnny lingered for an instant, looked carefully around, and then lowered himself into the fissure. A moment later he reached up his arms to Florry, lowered her also, and both disappeared from view. Yet from time to time their voices came faintly from below—with the gurgle of water—as of festive gnomes at play.

At the end of ten minutes they reappeared, a little muddy, a little bedraggled, but flushed and happy. There were two pink spots on Florry's cheeks, and she clasped something tightly in her little red fist.

"There," said Johnny, when they were seated in the straw again, "now mind you don't tell."

But here suddenly Florry's lips began to quiver, and she gave vent to a small howl of anguish.

"You ain't bit by a trant'ler nor nothin'?" said Johnny anxiously. "Hush up!"

"N—o—o! But—"

"But what?" said Johnny,

"Mar said I *must* tell ! Mar said I was to fin' out where you get the truly gold ! Mar said I was to get you to take me," howled Florry, in an agony of remorse.

Johnny gasped. "You Injin !" he began.

"But I won't—Johnny !" said Florry, clutching his leg frantically. "I won't and I shan't ! I ain't no Injin !"

Then, between her sobs, she told him, how her mother and Mr. Staples had said that she was to ask Johnny the next time they met to take her where he found the "truly gold," and she was to remember where it was and to tell them. And they were going to give her a new dolly and a hunk of gingerbread. "But I won't—and I shan't !" she said passionately. She was quite pale again.

Johnny was convinced, but thoughtful. "Tell 'em," he said hoarsely—"tell 'em a big whopper ! They won't know no better. They'll never guess where." And he briefly recounted the wild-goose chase he had given the minister.

"And get the dolly and the cake," said Florry, her eyes shining through her tears.

"In course," said Johnny. "They'll get the dolly back, but you kin have eated the cake first." They looked at each other, and their eyes danced together over this heaven-sent inspiration. Then Johnny took off her shoes and stockings, rubbed her cold feet with his dirty handkerchief, and said : "Now you trot over to your mar !"

He helped her through the loose picket of the fence, and was turning away, when her faint voice again called him.

"Johnny !" He turned back ; she was standing on the other side of the fence holding out her arms to him. He went to her with shining eyes, lifted her up, and from her hot but loving little lips took a fatal kiss.

For, only an hour later, Mrs. Fraser found Florry in her bed, tossing with a high fever and a light head. She was talking of "Johnny" and "gold," and had a flake of the

metal in her tiny fist. When Mr. Staples was sent for, and, with the mother and father, hung anxiously above her bed, to their eager questioning they could only find out that Florry had been to a high mountain, ever so far away, and on the top of it there was gold lying around, and a shining figure was giving it away to the people.

"And who were the people, Florry dear," said Mr. Staples persuasively; "anybody ye know here?"

"They woz angels," said Florry, with a frightened glance over her shoulder.

I grieve to say that Mr. Staples did not look as pleased at the celestial vision as he might have, and poor Mrs. Frazer probably saw that in her child's face which drove other things from her mind. Yet Mr. Staples persisted.

"And who led you to this beautiful mountain? Was it Johnny?"

"No."

"Who then?"

Florry opened her eyes on the speaker. "I fink it was Dod," she said, and closed them again.

But here Dr. Duchesne hurried in, and after a single glance at the child hustled Mr. Staples from the room. For there were grave complications that puzzled him. Florry seemed easier and quieter under his kindly voice and touch, but did not speak again—and so, slowly sinking, passed away that night in a dreamless sleep. This was followed by a mad panic at Burnt Spring the next day, and Mrs. Medliker fled with her two girls to Sacramento, leaving Johnny, ostensibly strong and active, to keep house until his father's return. But Mr. Medliker's return was again delayed, and in the epidemic, which had now taken a fast hold of the settlement, Johnny's secret—and indeed the boy himself—was quite forgotten. It was only on Mr. Medliker's arrival it was known that he had been lying

dangerously ill, alone, in the abandoned house. In his strange reticence and firmness of purpose he had kept his sufferings to himself—as he had his other secret—and they were revealed only in the wasted, hollow figure that feebly opened the door to his father.

On which intelligence Mr. Staples was, as usual, promptly on the spot with his story of Johnny's secret to the father, and his usual eager questioning to the fast sinking boy. "And now, Johnny," he said, leaning over the bed, "tell us *all*. There is One from whom no secrets are hid. Remember, too, that dear Florry, who is now with the angels, has already confessed."

Perhaps it was because Johnny, even at that moment, hated the man; perhaps it was because at that moment he loved and believed in Florry; or perhaps it was only that because at that moment he was nearer the greater Truth than his questioner, but he said, in a husky voice, "You lie!"

Staples drew back with a flushed face, but lips that writhed in a pained and still persistent eagerness. "But, Johnny, at least tell us where—wh—wow—wow."

I am obliged to admit that these undignified accents came from Mr. Staples's own lips, and were due to the sudden pressure of Mr. Medliker's arm around his throat. The teamster was irascible and prompt through much mule-driving, and his arm was, from the same reason, strong and sinewy. Mr. Staples felt himself garrotted and dragged from the room, and only came-to under the stars outside, with the hoarse voice of Mr. Medliker in his ears—

"You're a minister of the gospel, I know, but ef ye say another word to my Johnny I'll knock the gospel stuffin' out of ye. Ye hear me! *I've driven mules afore!*"

He then strode back into the room. "Ye needn't answer, Johnny—he's gone."

But so too had Johnny, for he never answered the question in this world—nor, please God!—was he required to in the next. He lay still and dead. The community was scandalised the next day when Mr. Medliker sent for a minister from Sacramento to officiate at his child's funeral—in place of Mr. Staples—and then the subject was dropped.

But the influence of Johnny's hidden treasure still remained as a superstition in the locality. Prospecting parties were continually made up to discover the unknown claim, but always from evidence and data altogether apocryphal. It was even alleged that a miner had one night seen the little figures of Johnny and Florry walking over the hilltop, hand in hand, but that they had vanished among the stars at the very moment he thought he had discovered their secret. And then it was forgotten; the prosperous Mr. Medliker, now the proprietor of a stage-coach route, moved away to Sacramento; Medliker's Ranch became a station for changing horses, and, as the new railway in time superseded even that, sank into a blacksmith's shop on the outskirts of the new town of Burnt Spring. And then one day six years after, news fell as a bolt from the blue!

It was thus recorded in the county paper: "A piece of rare good fortune, involving, it is said, the development of a lead of extraordinary value, has lately fallen to the lot of Mr. John Silsbee, the popular blacksmith, on the site of the old Medliker Ranch. In clearing out the failing water-course known as Burnt Spring, Mr. Silsbee came upon a rich ledge or pocket at the actual source of the spring—a fissure in the ground a few rods from the road. The present yield has been estimated to be from eight to ten thousand dollars. But the event is considered

as one of the most remarkable instances of the vagaries of 'prospecting' ever known, as this valuable 'pot-hole' existed undisturbed *for eight years* not *fifty yards* from the old cabin that was in former times the residence of J. Medliker, Esq., and the station of the Pioneer Stage Company, and was utterly unknown and unsuspected by the previous inhabitants! Verily truth is stranger than fiction!"

A Tale of Three Truants.

THE schoolmaster at Hemlock Hill was troubled that morning. Three of his boys were missing. This was not only a notable deficit in a roll-call of twenty, but the absentees were his three most original and distinctive scholars. He had received no preliminary warning or excuse. Nor could he attribute their absence to any common local detention or difficulty of travel. They lived widely apart and in different directions. Neither were they generally known as "chums," or comrades, who might have entered into an unhallowed combination to "play hookey."

He looked at the vacant places before him with a concern which his other scholars little shared, having, after their first lively curiosity, not unmixed with some envy of the derelicts, apparently forgotten them. He missed the cropped head and inquisitive glances of Jackson Tribbs on the third bench, the red hair and brown eyes of Providence Smith in the corner, and there was a blank space in the first bench where Julian Fleming, a lanky giant of seventeen, had sat. Still, it would not do to show his concern openly, and, as became a man who was at least three years the senior of the eldest, Julian Fleming, he reflected that they were "only boys," and that their friends were probably ignorant of the good he was doing them, and so dismissed the subject. Nevertheless, it struck him as wonderful how the little world beneath him got on without them. Hanky

Rogers, bully, who had been kept in wholesome check by Julian Fleming, was lively and exuberant, and his conduct was quietly accepted by the whole school; Johnny Stebbins, Tribbs's bosom friend, consorted openly with Tribbs's particular enemy; some of the girls were singularly gay and conceited. It was evident that some superior masculine oppression had been removed.

He was particularly struck by this last fact when, the next morning, no news coming of the absentees, he was impelled to question his flock somewhat precisely concerning them. There was the usual shy silence which follows a general inquiry from the teacher's desk; the children looked at one another, giggled nervously, and said nothing.

"Can you give me any idea what might have kept them away?" said the master.

Hanky Rogers looked quickly around, began, "Playin' hook—" in a loud voice, but stopped suddenly without finishing the word, and became inaudible. The master saw fit to ignore him.

"Bee-huntin'," said Annie Roker vivaciously.

"Who is?" asked the master.

"Provy Smith, of course. Allers bee-huntin'. Gets lots o' honey. Got two full combs in his desk last week. He's awful on bees and honey. Ain't he, Jinny?" This in a high voice to her sister.

The younger Miss Roker, thus appealed to, was heard to murmur that of all the sneakin' bee-hunters she had ever seed, Provy Smith was the worst. "And squirrels—for nuts," she added.

The master became attentive—a clue seemed probable here. "Would Tribbs and Fleming be likely to go with him?" he asked.

A significant silence followed. The master felt that the

children recognised a doubt of this, knowing the boys were not "chums"; possibly they also recognised something incriminating to them, and with characteristic Freemasonry looked at one another and were dumb.

He asked no further questions, but, when school was dismissed, mounted his horse and started for the dwelling of the nearest culprit, Jackson Tribbs, four miles distant. He had often admired the endurance of the boy, who had accomplished the distance, including the usual meanderings of a country youth, twice a day, on foot, in all weathers, with no diminution of spirits or energy. He was still more surprised when he found it a mountain road, and that the house lay well up on the ascent of the pass. Autumn was visible only in a few flaming sumacs set among the climbing pines, and here, in a little clearing to the right, appeared the dwelling he was seeking.

"Tribbses," or "Tribbs's Run," was devoted to the work of cutting down the pines midway on a long, regularly sloping mountain-side, which allowed the trunks, after they were trimmed and cut into suitable lengths, to be slid down through rude "runs," or artificial channels, into the valley below, where they were collected by teams and conveyed to the nearest mills. The business was simple in the extreme, and was carried on by Tribbs senior, two men with saws and axes, and the natural laws of gravitation. The house was a long log cabin; several sheds roofed with bark or canvas seemed consistent with the still lingering summer and the heated odours of the pines, but were strangely incongruous to those white patches on the table-land and the white tongue stretching from the ridge to the valley. But the master was familiar with those Sierran contrasts, and, as he had never ascended the trail before, it might be only the usual prospect of the dwellers there. At this moment Mr. Tribbs appeared from the cabin, with

his axe on his shoulder. Nodding carelessly to the master he was moving away, when the latter stopped him.

"Is Jackson here?" he asked.

"No," said the father, half impatiently, still moving on. "Hain't seen him since yesterday."

"Nor has he been at school," said the master, "either yesterday or to-day."

Mr. Tribbs looked puzzled and grieved. "Now I reckoned you had kep' him in for some devilment of his'n, or lessons."

"Not *all night!*" said the master, somewhat indignant at this presumption of his arbitrary functions.

"Humph!" said Mr. Tribbs. "Mariar!" Mrs. Tribbs made her appearance in the doorway. "The schoolmaster allows that Jackson ain't been to school at all." Then, turning to the master, he added, "Thar! you settle it between ye," and quietly walked away.

Mrs. Tribbs looked by no means satisfied with or interested in the proposed *tête-à-tête*. "Hev ye looked in the bresh" (*i.e.* brush or underwood) "for him?" she said querulously.

"No," said the master; "I came here first. There are two other boys missing—Providence Smith and Julian Fleming. Did either of them—"

But Mrs. Tribbs had interrupted him with a gesture of impatient relief. "Oh, that's all, is it? Playin' hookey together, in course. 'Scuse me—I must go back to my bakin'." She turned away, but stopped suddenly, touched, as the master fondly believed, by some tardy maternal solicitude. But she only said, "When he *does* come back, you just give him a whalin', will ye?" and vanished in her kitchen.

The master rode away, half ashamed of his foolish concern for the derelicts. But he determined to try

Smith's father, who owned a small rancho lower down on a spur of the same ridge. But the spur was really nearer Hemlock Hill, and could have been reached more directly by a road from there. He, however, kept along the ridge, and after half-an-hour's ride was convinced that Jackson Tribbs could have communicated with Provy Smith without coming nearer Hemlock Hill, and this revived his former belief that they were together. He found the paternal Smith engaged in hoeing potatoes in a stony field. The look of languid curiosity with which he had regarded the approach of the master changed to one of equally languid aggression as he learned the object of his visit.

"Wot are ye comin' to *me* for? I ain't runnin' your school," he said, slowly and aggressively. "I started Providence all right for it mornin' afore last, since when I never set eyes on him. That lets *me* out. My business, young seller, is lookin' arter the ranch. Yours, I reckon, is lookin' arter your scholars."

"I thought it my business to tell you your son was absent from school," said the master coldly, turning away. "If you are satisfied, I have nothing more to say." Nevertheless, for the moment he was so startled by this remarkable theory of his own responsibility in the case that he quite accepted the father's callousness—or rather it seemed to him that his unfortunate charges more than ever needed his protection. There was still the chance of his hearing some news from Julian Fleming's father. He lived at some distance, in the valley on the opposite side of Hemlock Hill, and thither the master made his way. Luckily he had not gone far before he met Mr. Fleming, who was a teamster, *en route*. Like the fathers of the other truants, he was also engaged in his vocation. But, unlike the others, Fleming senior was jovial and talkative. He pulled up his long team promptly, received the master's

news with amused interest, and an invitation to spirituous refreshment from a demijohn in his waggon.

"Me and the ole woman kind o' spekilated that Jule might hev been over with Aunt Marthy ; but don't you worry, Mr. Schoolmaster. They're limbs, every one o' them, but they'll fetch up somewhere, all square ! Just you put two fingers o' that corn juice inside ye, and let 'em slide. Ye didn't hear what the 'lekshun news was when ye was at Smith's, did ye ?"

The master had not inquired. He confessed he had been worried about the boys. He had even thought that Jule might have met with an accident.

Mr. Fuming wiped his mouth, with a humorous affectation of concern. "Met with an *accident* ? Yes. I reckon not *one* accident, but *two* of 'em. These yer accidents Jules r' t with had two legs and were mighty lively accidents, 'you bet, and took him off with 'em ; or mebbe they had four legs, and he's huntin' 'em yet. Accidents ! Now I never thought o' that ! Well, when you come across him and *them accidents*, you just whale 'em, all three ! And ye won't take another drink ? Well, so long, then ! Gee up !" He rolled away, with a laugh, in the heavy dust kicked up by his plunging mules, and the master made his way back to the schoolhouse. His quest for that day was ended.

But the next morning he was both astounded and relieved, at the assembling of school, to find the three truants back in their places. His urgent questioning of them brought only the one and same response from each—"Got lost on the ridge." He further gathered that they had slept out for two nights, and were together all the time, but nothing further, and no details were given. The master was puzzled. They evidently expected punishment ; that was no doubt also the wish of their parents ; but if their story was true, it was a serious question if he ought to

inflict it. There was no means of testing their statement ; there was equally none by which he could controvert it. It was evident that the whole school accepted it without doubt ; whether they were in possession of details gained from the truants themselves which they had withheld from him, or whether from some larger complicity with the culprits, he could not say. He told them gravely that he should withhold equally their punishment and their pardon until he could satisfy himself of their veracity and that there had been no premeditation in their act. They seemed relieved, but here again he could not tell whether it sprang from confidence in their own integrity or merely from youthful hopefulness that delayed retribution never arrived !

It was a month before their secret was fully disclosed. It was slowly evolved from corroborating circumstances, but always with a shy reluctance from the boys themselves, and a surprise that any one should think it of importance. It was gathered partly from details picked up at ~~less~~ less or on the playground, from the voluntary testimony of teamsters and packers, from a record in the county newspaper, but always shaping itself into a consecutive and harmonious narrative.

It was a story so replete with marvellous escape and adventure that the master hesitated to accept it in its entirety until after it had long become a familiar history, and was even forgotten by the actors themselves. And even now he transcribes it more from the circumstances that surrounded it than from a hope that the story will be believed.

WHAT HAPPENED

Master Provy Smith had started out that eventful morning with the intention of fighting Master Jackson Tribbs for the "Kingship" of Table Ridge—a trifling territory of ten

leagues square—Tribbs having infringed on his boundaries and claimed absolute sovereignty over the whole mountain range. Julian Fleming was present as referee and bottle-holder. The battle-ground selected was the highest part of the ridge. The hour was six o'clock, which would allow them time to reach school before its opening, with all traces of their conflict removed. The air was crisp and cold—a trifle colder than usual—and there was a singular thickening of the sun's rays on the ridge, which made the distant peaks indistinct and ghostlike. However, the two combatants stripped "to the buff," and Fleming patronisingly took position at the "corner," leaning upon a rifle, which, by reason of his superior years, and the wilderness he was obliged to traverse in going to school, his father had lent him to carry. It was that day a providential weapon.

Suddenly Fleming uttered the word "Sho!" The two combatants paused in their first "squaring off" to see, to their surprise, that their referee had faced round, with his gun in his hand, and was staring in another direction.

"B'ar!" shouted the three voices together. A huge bear, followed by its cubs, was seen stumbling awkwardly away to the right, making for the timber below. In an instant the boys had hurried into their jackets again, and the glory of fight was forgotten in the fever of the chase. Why should they pound each other when there was something to really *kill*? They started in instant pursuit, Julian leading.

But the wind was now keen and bitter in their faces, and that peculiar thickening of the air which they had noticed had become first a dark blue and then a whitening pall, in which the bear was lost. They still kept on. Suddenly Julian felt himself struck between the eyes by what seemed a snow-ball, and his companions were as

quickly spattered by gouts of monstrous clinging snow-flakes. Others as quickly followed—it was not snowing, it was snowballing. They at first laughed, affecting to retaliate with these whirling, flying masses shaken like clinging feathers from a pillow; but in a few seconds they were covered from head to foot by snow, their limbs impeded or pinioned against them by its weight, their breath gone. They stopped blindly, breathlessly. Then, with a common instinct, they turned back. But the next moment they heard Julian cry, "Look out!" Coming towards them out of the storm was the bear, who had evidently turned back by the same instinct. An ungovernable instinct seized the younger boys, and they fled. But Julian stopped with levelled rifle. The bear stopped too, with sullen, staring eyes. But the eyes that glanced along the rifle were young, true, and steady. Julian fired. The hot smoke was swept back by the gale into his face, but the bear turned and disappeared in the storm again. Julian ran on to where his companions had halted at the report, a little ashamed of their cowardice. "Keep on that way!" he shouted hoarsely. "No use tryin' to go where the b'ar couldn't. Keep on!"

"Keep on—whar? There ain't no trail—no nuthin'!" said Jackson querulously, to hold down a rising fear. It was true. The trail had long since disappeared; even their footprints of a moment before were filled up by the piling snow; they were isolated in this stony upland, high in air, without a rock or tree to guide them across its vast white level. They were bitterly cold and benumbed. The stimulus of the storm and chase had passed, but Julian kept driving them before him, himself driven along by the furious blast, yet trying to keep some vague course along the waste. So an hour passed. Then the wind seemed to have changed, or else they had travelled in a

circle—they knew not which, but the snow was in their faces now. But, worst of all, the snow had changed too; it no longer fell in huge blue flakes, but in millions of stinging grey granules. Julian's face grew hard and his eyes bright. He knew it was no longer a snow-squall, but a lasting storm. He stopped; the boys tumbled against him. He looked at them with a strange smile.

"Hev you two made up?" he said.

"No—o!"

"Make up, then."

"What?"

"Shake hands!"

They clasped each other's red benumbed fingers and laughed, albeit a little frightened at Julian. "Go on!" he said curtly.

They went on dazedly, stupidly, for another hour.

Suddenly Provy Smith's keen eyes sparkled. He pointed to a singular irregular mound of snow before them, plainly seen above the dreary level. Julian ran to it with a cry, and began wildly digging. "I knew I hit him," he cried, as he brushed the snow from a huge and hairy leg. It was the bear—dead, but not yet cold. He had succumbed with his huge back to the blast, the snow piling a bulwark behind him, where it had slowly roofed him in. The half-frozen lads threw themselves fearlessly against his furry coat and crept between his legs, nestling themselves beneath his still warm body with screams of joy. The snow they had thrown back increased the bulwark, and, drifting over it, in a few moments enclosed them in a thin shell of snow. Thoroughly exhausted, after a few grunts of satisfaction a deep sleep fell upon them, from which they were only awakened by the pangs of hunger. Alas! their dinners—the school dinners—had been left on the inglorious battlefield. Nevertheless, they talked of eating the bear

if it came to the worst. They would have tried it even then, but they were far above the belt of timber; they had matches—what boy has not?—but no *wood*. Still, they were reassured, and even delighted, with this prospect, and so fell asleep again, stewing with the dead bear in the half-impervious snow, and woke up in the morning ravenous, yet to see the sun shining in their faces through the melted snow, and for Jackson Tribbs to quickly discover, four miles away as the crow flies, the cabin of his father among the flaming sumacs.

They started up in the glare of the sun, which at first almost blinded them. They then discovered that they were in a depression of the table-land that sloped before them to a deep gully in the mountain-side, which again dropped into the cañon below. The trail they had lost, they now remembered, must be near this edge. But it was still hidden, and in seeking it there was danger of some fatal misstep in the treacherous snow. Nevertheless, they sallied out bravely, although they would fain have stopped to skin the bear, but Julian's mandate was peremptory. They spread themselves along the ridge, at times scraping the loose snow away in their search for the lost trail.

Suddenly they all slipped and fell, but rose again quickly, laughing. Then they slipped and fell again, but this time with the startling consciousness that it was not *they* who had slipped—but *the snow!* As they regained their feet they could plainly see now that a large crack on the white field, some twenty feet in width, extended between them and the carcass of the bear, showing the glistening rock below. Again they were thrown down with a sharp shock. Jackson Tribbs, who had been showing a strange excitement, suddenly gave a cry of warning. "Lie flat, fellers! but keep a-crawlin' and jumpin'! We're goin' down a slide!" And the next moment they were sliding and tossing appar-

ently with the whole snow-field, down towards the gullied precipice.

What happened after this, and how long it lasted, they never knew. For, hurried along, with increasing momentum but always mechanically clutching at the snow, and bounding from it as they swept on, they sometimes lost breath, and even consciousness. At times they were half suffocated in rolling masses of drift, and again free and skimming over its arrested surface, but always falling, as it seemed to them, almost perpendicularly. In one of these shocks they seemed to be going through a thicket of underbrush—but Provy Smith knew that they were the tops of pine-trees. At last there was one shock longer and lasting, followed by a deepening thunder below them. The avalanche had struck a ledge in the mountain-side, and precipitated its lower part into the valley.

Then everything was still, until Provy heard Julian's voice calling. He answered, but there was no response from Tribbs. Had he gone over into the valley? They set up a despairing shout! A voice—a smothered one—that might be his, came apparently from the snow beneath them. They shouted again; the voice, vague and hollow, responded, but it was now surely his.

“Where are you?” screamed Provy.

“Down the chimbley.”

There was a black square of adobe sticking out of the snow near them. They ran to it. There was a hole. They peered down, but could see nothing at first but a faint glimmer.

“Come down, fellows! It ain’t far!” said Tribbs’s voice.

“Wot yer got there?” asked Julian cautiously.

“Suthin’ to eat.”

That was enough. In another instant Julian and Provy went down the chimney. What was a matter of fifteen feet after a thousand? Tribbs had already lit a candle, by

which they could see that they were in the cabin of some tunnel-man at work on the ridge. He had probably been in the tunnel when the avalanche fell, and escaped, though his cabin was buried. The three discoverers helped themselves to his larder. They laughed and ate as at a picnic, played cards, pretended it was a robber's cave, and finally, wrapping themselves in the miner's blankets, slept soundly, knowing where they were, and confident that they could find the trail early the next morning. They did so, and, without going to their homes, came directly to school, having been absent about fifty hours. They were in high spirits—except for the thought of approaching punishment, never dreaming to evade it by anything miraculous in their adventures.

Such was briefly their story. Its truth was corroborated by the discovery of the bear's carcass, by the testimony of the tunnel-man, who found his larder mysteriously ransacked in his buried cabin, and, above all, by the long white tongue that for many months hung from the ledge into the valley. Nobody thought the lanky Julian a hero—least of all himself. Nobody suspected that Jackson Tribbs's treatment of a "slide" had been gathered from experiments in his father's "runs"—and he was glad they did not. The master's pardon obtained, the three truants cared little for the opinion of Hemlock Hill. They knew *themselves*; that was enough.

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